



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



600072132L





FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.

A Tale of the Indian Mutiny.

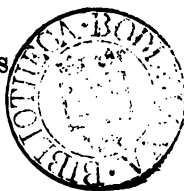
BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE KING'S OWN BORDERERS,"
"SECOND TO NONE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES
VOL. III.



LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
BROADWAY, LUDGATE.
NEW YORK: 416, BROOME STREET,
1868.

[All rights reserved.]

250. v. 176.



CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. COLONEL PERSHAD SING AT HOME	1
II. THE FAKIR MAKES A DISCOVERY	13
III. GONE!	22
IV. IN THE ZENANA	36
V. NEWS FOR POLLY	49
VI. TRUE TO HIS SALT	62
VII. ONCE MORE IN THE WILDERNESS	74
VIII. A SHELTER	88
IX. RECONCILIATION	97
X. HARROWER'S STORY	105
XI. WHERE THE WINE AND CHUPATTIES WENT	112
XII. UNWELCOME VISITORS	126
XIII. IN THE DEN OF THE DACOITS	139
XIV. ON THE GANGES	154
XV. A SEARCH FOR THE LOST	162
XVI. AGAIN IN THE STREET OF SILVER	174
XVII. BY THE HILLS OF ALMORA	189

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVIII. THE ARMY OF RETRIBUTION . . .	201
XIX. THE NIGHT OF THE RED . . .	214
XX. A MARTYR	231
XXI. POLLY'S NOTE	249
XXII. IN THE CUCHUC ODA	256
XXIII. * * * * *	261
XXIV. BLOWN FROM THE GUNS	271
XXV. NEMESIS	280
XXVI. HODSON'S HORSE	295
XXVII. THE TOMB OF HOMAION	303
XXVIII. THE HIGHROAD TO OLD ENGLAND	312

FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

COLONEL PERSHAD SING AT HOME.

IT is towards the end of this eventful month of May, when we must take the reader back to Delhi, (which had now become a vast garrison of sepoy, whose numbers were daily increasing,) and to Dr. Weston's handsome mansion, with its spacious gardens, in the suburb beside the Jumna.

The peacocks still spread their gorgeous plumage on the white marble terrace ; the great and sombre adjutant-birds were still dozing in the sunshine, on the balustrades of the roof, and driving thence the ravens from time to time. The oleander with its perfumed clusters of pink ; the baubool with its bells of gold ; the jasmine and the acacia were still in all their beauty as when we saw them last, with

the ring-necked paroquets and the yellow sparrows (that look like clouds of gold when floating in flocks upon the river), the light green flycatcher, and the turtle dove perching on their branches, together with blue, amber and scarlet butterflies, and beetles of giant size, bright as amethysts and emeralds: all seemed unchanged, but the dwelling had a new master now!

In the spacious inner drawing-room, the furniture and English engravings of which were unaltered, but where most of the ornaments had been smashed or appropriated by recent visitors, (Gunga Rai having carried off all the bronze idols and statuettes), and where the yellow satin sofas and chairs had all been punctured again and again by the swords and bayonets of those in search of concealed valuables, sat the new lord of the mansion, on a species of divan, composed chiefly of pillows abstracted from the various beds, and piled up for his ease and luxury upon the matting which covered the floor in lieu of a carpet—Perashad Sing, Ex-Thug, late Havildar, and now Colonel of the 54th Native Infantry, dressed, not in uniform, which the sepoy generally avoid when not on parade, but in a loose eastern dress, with a white turban of fine muslin on his head, and Dr. Weston's magnificent hookah close by him with the china vase encased in silver filigree,

and its coils covered with crimson and gold thread.

The gallant officer had a fine English watch in his fob, and on every finger a valuable gold ring, all the spoil of the dead, and each relic might have told a terrible story.

We have described him as having eyes, whiskers, and mustachios of the jettest black, and the latter as of such enormous length, that they were carried over his shoulders and tied behind at the nape of his neck. His small spare and lean figure was hidden amid the amplitude of his flowing cotton dress; but his legs and feet were bare, though Colonel Pershad Sing now gave himself all the airs of a Hindoo of rank, acting as he thought the soubadar major of the Mapert-ka-Pultan should do.

He lounged listlessly and crook-legged on his soft and improvised divan, and had usually on each side of him an attendant, with two of Dr. Weston's silver salvers, containing the betel-leaf which is constantly chewed by all high caste Brahmins, who reckon it as the *fifth* among their "eight sensual delights," and consequently deem it a great luxury. Close by, was one of the Doctor's china winecoolers, into which he languidly dropped the leaves, as the juice became extracted.

There was a decidedly blasé air about Pershad Sing now ; the once active, wiry, and dapper little sepoy Havildar had indulged to satiety, in excesses of every kind, in luxury, and in a most un-oriental amount of jollity, during the run of riot enjoyed by the mutineers of late—a riot that seemed unlikely to terminate, for the citizens committed outrages on each other, and every other week, a kotwal or new mayor, was impaled or blown from a gun.

On the evening in question, the valiant little Colonel had dispensed with his two Hindoo slave girls, and, as he was unlikely to be disturbed by visitors, preferred to receive his betel-leaf from a salver held by the white hands of—Kate Mellon !

She was half kneeling on the pillows near him, dressed, not in eastern costume, but in her own attire, for she had now the use of her own room, and the wardrobes of herself and sisters.

Nearly four weeks had elapsed since she deemed herself a widow, and she had now been some days in the hands of Pershad Sing, who brought her to his house—by a strange chance her father's—on that night when he had found her with Mohassan and the friendly Parsees at the Cashmere Gate, and as yet, through God's mercy, she had neither been killed, nor even maltreated.

When he first dragged her home to be his slave and victim, Pershad Sing was ignorant that she was one of the missing [daughters of the Padre Weston Sahib, for whom Mirza Mogul had ransacked all the city, and for whom he had offered the princely reward of one hundred golden mohurs.

To give her up *after* she had been one night under his roof, Pershad Sing was quite well aware would only have perilled his own head, and as he set some store upon the retention of it, he secluded Kate for himself, and yet so great was his terror of Mogul, the new Commander-in-chief, that his mind was sorely divided between a great admiration for Kate's person, and a conviction that his own safety required her death, as the best means of concealing that she had ever been in his house.

This wholesome dread of the prince, and his doubts of how to act, caused him to respect and treat her tolerably well, and also to seclude her sedulously from his companions and visitors, among whom were the Fakir Gunga Rai, the Rissaldar Shumshodeen Khan, and especially Assim Alec, the Doctor's native valet, who would at once have recognised her, and claimed the reward.

If the worthy Parsee merchant in the street

of silver, and his disciples of Zoroaster all escaped pillage to their own great astonishment, it was from this circumstance too—the chill of dismay that came over Pershad Sing on discovering who his prisoner was, and which made him at first resolve on a system of secrecy, that every day filled him with fresh qualms, and with fears that she might be found out by the Rissaldar, or that the Parsee might in revenge, speak of the prisoner who had been taken from him; for dead or alive, she was worth a hundred mohurs.

So strong was the latter fear, that one day Pershad visited the merchant to pledge him to secrecy, under the most terrible threats, adding solemnly the assertion that the “Mem Sahib was no longer in Delhi,” and that he had permitted her to escape in safety to Kurnaul.

“If the Hindoo dog swore it on the water of the Ganges, I would not believe him!” said the Parsee, when Pershad had withdrawn; “neither would I believe a Mohammedan, even if he swore by the shirt of the Prophet at Candahar. I trust none but the Feringhees, the poor Feringhees who ruled the land so well, and let us trade in peace.”

But the information which he gave to Safiyah, the daughter of Khoda Bux, when next day she

called at his shop to make some purchases, that young Mrs. Mellon was a prisoner in her father's house, and in the hands of Pershad Sing, a somewhat noted man among the mutineers, proved startling tidings indeed!

"Why should I have given her up to Mirza Mogul?" the colonel would sometimes mutter to himself; "were not all the white women we could find at the Cashmere Gate taken to him; and like that Mohammedan cur, Baboo Sing—whose face might make a horse rear, or scare a flock of crows—Mogul has his zenana filled with the prettiest girls of Bundelcund and Lahore, while I have only this one, and yet—and yet—it were safer to cast her into the Jumna, than have her about me."

Some such dark and distracting thoughts were occurring to him, when Kate knelt near him with the salver of betel-leaf, and there was consequently a fierce and sombre expression in his eyes as he surveyed her. She was pale and hollow-cheeked, with her features acutely delicate now, but still she was brilliantly fair, with the wealth of her auburn tresses braided about her head, and tinged with gold in the sunshine.

She had on a dark dress, and a few jet ornaments, for she deemed herself, we have said, a widow; she was plainly but neatly attired—for

even amid her great grief the force of habit caused her to make a careful toilette.

Under the eyes of Pershad Sing she cowered and shrunk back, just when in the act of handing him the required supply of his beloved leaf.

"Oh," she moaned, "can I do nothing to please you, sir?"

"Yes, you might," growled Pershad.

"To win your favour!" she began.

"You have already won it," interrupted Pershad, who by constant intercourse with the British officers of his regiment—the poor fellows whose bodies were still lying, unburied, in the waggon beside the Flagstaff Tower—had picked up a tolerable smattering of the English language; "you are here, alive and safe, *as yet*, what more would you wish?"

"True—for my life I thank you," she answered, meekly.

"And there is one simple way by which you might please me."

"Name it, sir," said Kate, closing her eyes, and shuddering in the fear of what he might say.

"It is to hold your tongue, which speaks of nothing but useless grief; and cease to upbraid me by your tears, for they weary me, and I shall get tired of them shortly."

He regarded her gloomily for a time, and then melted by her beauty and grace, and taking courage from her utter helplessness, he seized her shrinking hand and said in what he meant to be his most winning manner—

“Why are you so obstinate and cruel, if you pretend to be grateful? You will neither love me nor marry me—nor can I even kiss you (perhaps my mustachios smell of betel) and yet you are my slave, whom I might cut to pieces, joint by joint, and toss to the aligators in the Jumna, or give to the budmashes of Delhi to nail by the hands and feet, on the city wall.”

Kate had become used to this style of love-making, and it could neither excite her laughter or her scorn.

“Marry *you*!” she exclaimed, in a bitter and hollow voice; “you forget that I am already married.”

“To a vile Feringhee, who is no doubt dead—but dead or living what does it matter to me? I could marry you too for all that; tears again,” he growled, “stop them, I tell you—I hate the sight of them! By the god of Terror, a little more of this work, and I shall twist the holy roomal round your throat!” he added, savagely, as his old Thug propensities occurred to him. “Do you fear the suttee if I die before you?” he resumed;

“the holy suttee which your blasphemous people preached against and put down, and which we shall now revive, as the men of your accursed race are exterminated. If so, you might be excused, as being of another lineage; and yet I saw four wives and five slave girls, all of different nations, cheerfully ascend the funeral pile of Runjeet Sing, and perish in the flames, amid clouds of incense and perfume.”

“I owe you thanks for one thing, sir.”

“Glad to hear it—what may this one thing be?”

“You did not punish the poor Parsee for protecting me.”

“Though a Gueber—a cursed, idolatrous worshipper of the god of fire, he has, nevertheless, a high reputation in Delhi.”

“How—he, a Parsee?”

“Yes—even he.”

“As a man and a merchant?” continued poor Kate, hoping to gain the man’s good will by conversing with him.

“Yes,” replied Pershad, “both as a man and a merchant, for it is said of Mohassan, that he has become wealthy by selling to the rich man at his own price, and to the poor at theirs. Hence is Mohassan both prosperous and popular.”

It was chiefly when Pershad intoxicated himself with bhang or with raki (a habit he had acquired in cantonments) that Kate feared him, for then his prudence and his fear of the Prince Mogul, alike departed. The nights were a source of greater terror to her, even than the day. She usually barricaded herself in her own room, and never undressed. Before committing herself to sleep, and even when she prayed, she felt thoroughly resolved, if he came to molest her, to leap headlong from the window on the marble terrace, which was nearly fifty feet below. She nightly on her knees, implored God to pardon her for this terrible resolution, and she put implicit faith in Him, believing that her mental sufferings and her great endurance would procure her a peaceful death-bed.

To this crushed state of calm desperation had the once laughing bride of Rowley Mellon come !

It happened that Pershad Sing was often on duty at the camp, at the palace, and elsewhere; but during such absences she was strictly watched. The gates of the high walls around the house were always closed, and he had a sepoy guard on his residence, for there the colours of the regiment—the same that it had borne in the campaign against Runjeet Sing—were lodged with all formality.

Many of his nights were spent with the distinguished visitors before named ; and from these he had carefully to conceal the fact of her existence ; and in the dark hours as they stole on, and while she lay awake with an anxious and fluttering heart, she could hear the monotonous songs of the Hindoos and the beating of tom-tom, with the tinkling anklet bells of the Nautch girls, and others of more doubtful repute, who danced before Pershad and his guests in her drawing-room.

Lying in her own bed, with her sad face on its old pillow, it was difficult to conceive, at times, that she was not labouring under some horrible nightmare, from which she would be wakened by the voices of Lena and Polly in the next room !

CHAPTER II.

THE FAKIR MAKES A DISCOVERY.

THOUGH naturally a joyous and a brilliant girl, Kate was one of thought and reflection; so there had been times, when in the midst of her greatest happiness and the flush of her love for Mellon, she had wondered in her heart, how she would *feel* if she lost him and was left alone in the world.

In those times she would pray secretly to Heaven, that in the hour he was taken that she should be gone before him, or should soon follow; and now—*now*, he was gone, perhaps, and she still lingered here, reserved for a fate of which she could not see the end, save that too probably it would be a horrible one!

And oh! if—for she knew that she was in cruel, frightful, and merciless hands—if she should be degraded, as she knew too many of her countrywomen, her friends and companions, had

been in the streets of Delhi—even those who had gathered round her in that last moment of happiness, when her father blessed her, and hailed her as a wedded wife—if she should be rendered loathsome in her own sight, perhaps, as some were, disfigured and mutilated, how could she survive, even if found and freed by Rowley Mellon—jolly, laughing Rowley, with his long, fair whiskers, and half affected air, which she was wont to quiz in the first days of their courtship, and before flirtation gave place to solid affection.

Then tears would almost choke her, and despair fill her soul—black and hopeless despair! She was alone, fearfully and helplessly alone, and yet in her father's house. How much better off were Lena and Harrower in their companionship, even in the wilderness through which they had at times to wander.

The familiar objects which met her eye at every turn, the innumerable personal relics of her lost family added to the poignancy of Kate's grief; now it was some of her papa's favourite books, then portions of Lena's music, with all its associations; perhaps a note of Dicky Rivers's to Polly, or some of little Willie's toys, and though last not least, Jack Harrower's sketch of Thorpe Audley, and the church, under the shadow of

which, their mother's grave was lying in peaceful England, far, far away.

The truthfulness of Kate Mellon, her purity, her love for her lost, but handsome and manly young bridegroom; her sweet and tender thoughts; her piety, which was great, her artlessness and all her pretty and ladylike ways, were utterly lost on persons such as those among whom she found herself now, the Hindoo cousins, nieces, and slaves of Pershad Sing, who filled the house of which he had so lawlessly possessed himself.

It was a mercy for her that the terror of Mirza Mogul was a shield for a time, though Pershad hovered between her possession and her destruction, for he knew that if the knowledge of her having been in his hands, ever came to the prince's ear, at any time, however remote, his head would not be worth a single ana.

Kate had become calm now; when alone, she had ceased to use that movement of the body, in which many women indulge during their passionate grief, bending the head and swaying to and fro. Whether her relations and her husband—the husband of an hour—were all dead, or whether some survived, she feared she should never know; so she only longed for death as a means perhaps of enlightenment, of reunion, and

most certainly of freedom from the odious attentions of Pershad Sing.

So the dreary and anxious days and nights stole on, and she remained a captive in her father's house with her wedding ring tied amid the masses of her beautiful auburn hair, lest the precious relic should be taken from her.

She was surrounded by nearly all her old familiar objects, the pictures, hangings, and furniture, the drawing-room and library remained nearly untouched; but where was her father with his kind kiss on meeting and parting, his morning and evening prayers; where Lena, with her almost matronly gravity of deportment; the joyous Polly and sweet little Willie?

Now the rooms were desecrated by noisy cavalry sowars, howling Fakirs, dancing girls and natives of all kinds, often so intoxicated with bhang, that her heart died within her of terror, when she heard the din below, though Pershad kept her secluded in her own room.

Escape was hopeless, so securely was she watched; but even if she got once beyond the garden walls, whither could she go, but to anticipate her doom, at the hands of those who might prove worse than Pershad Sing?

It could scarcely add to her mortification, to know that Ferukh Pandey and her father's valet

Assim Alee, were among the daily companions of her lord and proprietor the ex-havildar. The latter was in expectation of being sent with the 54th regiment, to reinforce Nana Sahib at Cawnpore, where, after the massacre there, a cavalry sowar carried off a daughter of General Wheeler (just as Pershad had done Kate Mellon) and the poor girl was never heard of again with any accuracy.

"Once out of Delhi," thought our new colonel, "once beyond the sphere and the terror of Mogul and *then*—" he ground his teeth, as he left his thoughts unuttered.

One evening she had been in compulsory attendance upon him, supplying him with betel-leaf and fanning his dingy visage with a large feather fan which had belonged to Polly (and which that young lady used to find a great accessory in her little flirting conversations) till he dropped asleep; and on this evening a change come over the tenor of her life—a change that was for the worse.

On Pershad gradually snorting away into slumber, among the pillows of the divan he had made for himself, she, while a glance of loathing escaped her, rose softly to steal from the inner drawing-room back to her own bed chamber, when the silken curtain of the doorway was withdrawn, and she suddenly found herself con-

fronted by two natives of very appalling aspect.

One was almost nude—at least he only wore a short, yellow shirt and scarlet cummerbund, with his matted hair hanging in dusty and knotted masses over his shoulders, and his face, which was smeared with ashes and red ochre in the form of a triangle—the emblem of the triple god—for he was the Fakir Gunga Rai. The other wore the light grey uniform of the Bengal Cavalry, and was a man of great bulk, stature, and apparent strength, with a singularly ferocious expression of face—an expression all the more hideous, that though he had enormous mustachios, save two black orifices, he had not the smallest indication of a nose; and to add to the grotesque ugliness of his visage it was surmounted by a Light Cavalry helmet, from the crest of which waved a large plume of scarlet horse hair, for he was the Rissaldar Shumshoodeen Khan, who in passing had dropped in to “tiff” with his new brother officer of the Infantry.

On seeing Kate, they simultaneously uttered a shout, and both grasped her, while the low shriek that escaped her brought Pershad Sing to his feet in rage and consternation, and with a bitter imprecation, in Hindostanee, on his lips.

“Oh! Brahma, Vishnu, and Seva!” cried the

fakir; "oh! Spirit who pervadest fire, here is one Feringhee left in Delhi!"

"A woman, too—oh! Pershad Sing—a sly fellow!" added the Rissaldar, laughing.

"How long have you secreted her here? I thought you a better Brahmin, than thus to cheat the budmashes of the bazaars and market-place."

"Ho, ho! this must be the girl he found with the cursed idolaters at the Cashmere Gate! I heard the story whispered about in the khans and bazaars. Oho! Pershad Sing!" and they laughed loudly, as each in turn twisted the poor girl about, surveying her with wolfish eyes of admiration, that made her blood curdle, while Pershad Sing, with every hair of his absurd mustachios bristling with mingled fear and anger, and already in anticipation, feeling his head rather loose on his shoulders, hastened forward, and releasing her, ordered her to retire, on which she fled to her room and locked herself in.

"Oh!" she wailed, in her despair, "death is coming close—close to me now, indeed—dear, dear Rowley!"

From the two valets, Ferukh Pandy and Assim Alee, and from all who might have recognised her as a daughter of "Weston Sahib," had he carefully concealed the fact of her existence; and

now, when every hour expecting Mogul's order to march for Cawnpore, and when he had a covered waggon for her conveyance out of the city, that she should have been discovered by these two visitors, from the peculiar nature of their characters, filled him with the greatest alarm.

"So the eight sensual delights of which the Holy Vedas speak are complete," said the fakir. "Soul of Brahma! my fine fellow, thou dost not content thyself with tobacco and betel-leaf!"

"Is she the girl you found at the Cashmere Gate?" asked the Rissaldar, in his snuffing voice, showing all his huge teeth as he laughed heartily.

"Yes," replied Pershad, greatly annoyed.

"Rumour said she was a daughter of the padre Weston Sahib."

"Then rumour lied!" said Pershad, who grew almost pea-green at this remark; "she was a fugitive from Meerut—here no one knows anything about her. I may rely on you, my friends?"

"Of what are you afraid?" asked the fakir, suspiciously.

"Bah! I am sick of killing the Feringhees," said Shumshooden; "get us a bottle of raki, or some of the padre Weston's wine (if there is any

of it left), a plate of betel-leaf, and then we shall talk about it."

From that hour the miseries of Kate Mellon were increased. The repulsive fakir, and the brutal, brawling cavalry sowar, whenever they came, insisted on her presence, and that she should play on the now half-unstrung piano, and even sing to them; and Pershad was afraid to refuse; and to describe her terror and repugnance of the whole trio, would require a powerful pen indeed!

CHAPTER III.

GONE!

THE constant dread of her being discovered had now become a reality, and caused Pershad Sing to regret bitterly that he had not at once destroyed her, and he thought he should yet do so, while her identity remained unknown.

“Oh! God—oh! kind Heaven—no hope—no succour—no escape!” wailed Kate, when she found herself summoned to appear before such visitors as the two men who had discovered her.

Gunga Rai now came to the mansion of the “Colonel” three or four times every day, upon various pretences; but the real reason was that he had personally some designs upon Kate, whose beauty had dazzled, while her utter helplessness encouraged him to hope, that by pretending to be her friend, he might lure her out of the hands of Pershad Sing, and into his own power.

Hoping to corrupt her, or to excite what he conceived to be love in her breast, the hideous fakir sung amorous songs in Oordoo, the words of which fell on poor Kate's ear harmlessly as Gaëlic, Sanscrit, or the unknown tongue would have done. Fortunately for her sweet sensibility, the English girl knew not a word of what this horror in human form chaunted, with his monotonous accompaniment on the tom-tom; but the spirit of the warmly voluptuous love-songs of Jayadeva, with the passion of the god Rama for the goddess Sita, if it had no effect upon the unhappy captive, exerted a dangerous power upon the imagination of the Rissaldar and that of Pershad Sing; thus at times she could read an expression in their black and glittering eyes that increased her terror.

In silent desperation the girl listened and looked on; texts, prayers, and fragments of Scripture came oddly to her memory, but without coherency; as a bird by the eye of a rattlesnake, she was fascinated by the strange appearance of the fakir, who was seated on his heels, like a Hindoo idol, singing, and playing alternately on the Indian drum or the vina, the wires of which he struck with his long and talon-like nails, while ogling her all the while through his matted elf-locks.

On the sound of many voices being heard in the garden, Pershad dismissed her in haste to her own room, where, as frequently before, she heard all the din of a Hindoo entertainment in the apartments below.

The plunder of the British Treasury had enabled the old King of Delhi, Mohamed Bahadoor Shah, to be lavish in mohurs to his chief adherents. Several had lately found their way into the pockets of Pershad Sing, and on this night he had resolved to give a final feast before marching for Cawnpore.

The gardens and mansion were made gay with hundreds of lanterns, made of coloured paper, and with the explosion of fire-works, rockets, and lights red, blue, green, and purple, while sweet-meats, mangoes, and betel-leaf, were given in plenty, with much of Dr. Weston's good wine, for those who were not particular about the precepts of the Prophet if Mohammedans, or their caste if Hindoos.

After a time all had departed, even the Nautch girls, whose dances were sometimes as much calculated to excite evil as the songs of Jayadeva—all but Gunga Rai and Shumshoodeen Khan, who had resolved to "make a night of it."

Fearful, as usual, of Kate being recognised, Pershad Sing had resolutely refused to let her be

seen by any of his motley guests; but now his two troublesome friends, who were both inflamed by wine, and bent on cruelty and mischief, urged that the miserable girl must be again brought forth, or that they should go to her!

As the latter intention might have been resented sword in hand, they did not immediately put it in execution; but had recourse to taunts.

"If she treated me, as she treats you," said the Rissaldar, "I would bind her hard and fast to a red hot cannon."

"We shall soon overcome her childish fears and scruples," said the fakir in his shrill whistling voice; "the daughter of a burnt father! and then—"

"What then?" asked Pershad gloomily.

"To the Jumna with her!"

"Of that necessity, I am the best judge," said Pershad, with difficulty keeping down his anger at all this interference in his affairs.

"Is Thuggee forgotten? Remember that we are the sworn servants of the goddess of destruction. Feringhee women!" continued the fakir, speaking with intense scorn, and in his energy, throwing back the tangled masses of his hair, shewing that in lieu of ashes, he had painted on his brow, a scarlet circle, the third eye of Seva, worn in memory of the god having once winked,

and thereby involved the world in darkness for a thousand years; "Feringhee women—what shall we say of them? They walk in public with men; they ride on horses; they drive in carriages and sit at table with men; they dance—dance like Nautch girls or Bayaderes, and with men, to whom they are unrelated by blood, or tie, or marriage! They shew their faces, yea and their bosoms without shame! Pooh—pooh! they are but cunning tricksters, those Feringhee girls, and is it one of them you would protect, Pershad Sing—you, who on the day of the revolt had your hands dyed red enough with the blood of her race at the Cashmere Gate?"

"Two of those English kafirs, I understand, have been seen lurking in the forest of Soonput," said Pershad Sing, uneasily, to change the conversation.

"Yes—a sahib and a mem sahib," replied the Rissaldar, cramming his huge mouth with betel-leaf, which did not improve his utterance, "and they were traced by Gunga to the fort of the Zemindar Lall, so by order of Mirza Mogul, a party of ours shall be in search of them to-morrow; by night we may expect them in Delhi, and Delhi shall have some amusement, in seeing the last of the race made food for the jackals. Death to all the Topee-wallahs!" he added, using the genuine

Asiatic term of contempt for all Europeans—hat-fellows.

“Hear me,” resumed the fakir, who was not to be baffled, “hear me, I say, for I would speak again.”

It was Friday, and Gunga Rai, after riding in from the house of the Zemindar Lall, had been officiating at a Hindoo temple near the Doab canal, and been busy there smearing a white marble image of Ganesa with ghee and cocoa nut oil. He had spent a busy day, and knew that he had to set out for the fort of the zemindar again with the naick and his two troopers; therefore, if the wine had inflamed his passions, religious enthusiasm made him cross, all the more, that he had regaled himself that afternoon by swinging in mid-air over Chandney Choke, with a pair of iron hooks under his shoulder-blades.

“Take up the tom-tom, and give us another song, friend Gunga,” said Pershad; “we are in no humour for being preached to.”

“And try some more of the wine,” suggested Shumshooden Khan, as he stretched himself on a sofa at full length; “did this golden wine of Cabul, belong to the padre Weston?”

“The padre Weston!” exclaimed the fakir, as a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

“Yes,” said Pershad, uneasily, for the snake-

like eyes of the fakir were on him ; " why do you ask ? "

" Because it has a strange flavour," replied the ex-sowar.

" Likely enough—a musk rat was found in the cellar."

" Ah ! it does taste of musk," said Shumshooden, affecting the air of a connoisseur, and putting the glass to where his nose should have been, just as he had seen some of the poor slaughtered subs of the 3rd Cavalry do in the mess-bungalow, for the idea of a musk rat tainting wine, is a popular fallacy in many parts of India ; but now the fakir who had also discovered " a rat," in another fashion exclaimed—

" It must be true ! "

" What is true ? " asked Pershad, " the wine ? "

" Pooh—pooh ! an idea I have."

" And this idea ? "

" Yea, true as that Vishnu is lord of the universe," cried the fakir, whose voice rose into a shrill scream, " that he has been nine times among us in the flesh, and shall appear a tenth time on a horse in the flaming Heavens, at the consummation of all things—it is true ! "

" Are you going mad ? " asked Pershad, astonished by this outburst.

" No, but I am growing wiser," replied the

other with a leering grin, "for I find that the girl you seclude here, is the lost daughter of the old kafir, Weston Sahib, for whom a hundred gold mohurs are offered by Mirza Mogul."

"It is false!" said Pershad Sing, with such evident rage and trepidation, that the keen eyed and sharp witted fakir saw his mere guess was a correct one.

"Pooh—pooh! it is true."

"How dare you pretend to know?"

"I have had her horoscope cast, and by the configuration of the planets—by the evidence of the stars, I find that she is a daughter of the Feringhee padre Weston, and by the holy bull of Seva, if you do not bring her forth to-night, I go to-morrow to the Dewan Khana, and you know for what purpose."

At this threat, the perspiration stood in globules on the brow of Pershad, who believed all the cunning fakir's nonsense about the horoscope, for he *had* heard of such things; and even the ruffianly Rissaldar began to look exceedingly uncomfortable, not knowing how much *he* might be compromised by the affair.

"Is this a pleasant return for all my hospitality?" stammered Pershad reproachfully, while he glanced to where his pistols lay on a white marble console; but the life of a fakir is sacred.

"No, I mean it not for that," sneered Gunga Rai, who saw the glance and knit his brows.

"For what then?"

"A punishment."

"Of what have I been guilty?"

"Covetousness and cunning—lies and deceit."

"And you will destroy me?" groaned Pershad.

"No, because I feel certain that you will have out the Feringhee girl, that we may amuse ourselves with her terror. Is she not an idolater, whom we may destroy if we please?"

"You believe yourself a Brahmin, Gunga Rai?" urged Pershad in desperation, but whose terror was all selfishly personal.

"A Brahmin, I am—purest of the pure."

"Well," said Pershad, with a contemptuous glance at the box of bhang and the empty bottles that lay near the fakir, "did not our forefathers, who were Brahmins, teach the doctrine that all mankind have a right to worship the Creator in any fashion they choose, and that *all* fashions are acceptable to Vishnu; that the world is but a garden planted with flowers of every colour, and that like sincerity, all colours are acceptable to him?"

"Rama! Rama! you should have thought of all that before slaughtering the Feringhees at

the Cashmere Gate," said the Fakir, doggedly, tugging at the Brahmin string which was over his left shoulder; "she is one, and must die too!"

"But not at once, oh, Gunga, light of religion," said the Rissaldar, into whose brain the fumes of the wine and bhang were mounting together, for in their new system of orgies these men were forgetting alike caste and faith together.

"At once, or to-morrow I go to the Dewan Khana," responded the obdurate luminary referred to.

"I shall tell Baboo that you are mad and not to admit you," said Pershad, in great tribulation of spirit; "Baboo is a good Mohammedan, a true man, and will defend me."

"Talk not of Baboo Bulli Sing," replied the Fakir, his shrill pipe rising again to an angry scream, while he threw up his long, lean hands with their demon-like claws; "he is a Mohammedan, and a Thug to boot; but he was never very particular as to what he did. As a boy he was the punkah-wallah of the Christian church, near the Main Guard,* and at the Mohammedan Mohurram, was wont to exhibit himself as the Ass Borak, with a man's face and a peacock's tail.

* St. James's Church, in Delhi, destroyed during the mutiny.

He will do anything to please the princes, but not you; and if once I speak you are a lost man, Pershad Sing—by Yama, King of Hell, you are!"

As he spoke his copper-coloured visage became ashy in hue, his fierce, hollow eyes were blood-shot, and seemed to shoot fire; his lips were compressed and white, while his hair seemed to bristle with the rancorous fury that inspired him.

His fierce threat, his tone, and aspect carried terror to the heart of Pershad Sing, together with a conviction that he would not be trifled with. Pershad knew and felt the power the Fakir had over him, and he knew that by the horrible nature of his self-imposed penances, Gunga Rai's voice was nearly law in Delhi.

"I yield," said Pershad, almost beside himself with rage.

"Follow me, then!" cried the huge Rissaldar, staggering up.

"Nay, I shall guide you. We shall bring forth the Feringhee girl, do with her and me as you will, only be—silent."

"Silent as the waters of the Jumna!" added the Fakir, with a deadly leer, the import of which there was no mistaking, as they all started to

their feet, and Pershad led the way to Kate's room.

Now that these men were together, skilled in all the secrets of Thuggee, and fired to a terrible pitch of excitement by bhang and the wines to which they were totally unaccustomed, what chance of mercy had poor Kate Mellon at their hands?

"Make less noise, Rissaldar," said Pershad, as they ascended the staircase, where the oil-shades were all lighted.

"Why?" asked the other, in a hoarse whisper.

"Lest we scare her."

"Rama!" chuckled the Fakir, "and what matter will it be if we do?"

"She may cast herself from a window—I have often feared her doing so ere now."

"When all is over," whispered the Fakir, "we must remember the roomal—the holy loop which Kalee throws round the necks of the unbelieving, the wicked, and the idolatrous."

"It is here," said the Rissaldar, untying his crimson sash, which had whilom belonged to the assassinated commander of the 3rd Cavalry; "this will do."

They listened at Kate's door; all was silent within.

"Abed?" suggested the Fakir, with his pecu-

liar leer between his tangles of hair; "ho! ho! the daughter of the man whose sole business was to preach down the worship of our gods, and to spit upon the vedas of Brahma!"

Pershad tried the lock, for the house had been constructed somewhat after the European fashion; but the door, which had Venetian blinds in its pannels, was secured and the key gone.

They called on their intended victim repeatedly but without receiving an answer. Then by a simultaneous movement with their shoulders, they burst open the somewhat frail and slender barrier, tumbling with its fragments into the room in a heap.

The pretty little bed, with its white muslin drapery, stood there unslept in apparently, and the mosquito curtains were undrawn.

Beside the toilette table, which was covered with white muslin and fine lace, near the mirror an oil-shade was burning. The windows were all closed; Pershad looked over one; there was nothing lying on the terrace below, so she had not escaped that way; and now, save its furniture, the room was undoubtedly empty.

She was gone—gone they knew not how or whither, nor could she be found, though the most accurate search was made between the cellars,

where the musk rats were alleged to taint the wine, and the roof where the adjutant birds sat blinking in the moonlight—gone without leaving a trace behind, and greater grew the terror and the rage of Pershad Sing, who feared that some of his recent numerous guests might have discovered and abducted her.

But this, the havildar, the naick, and sepoy of the guard upon his residence declared to be impossible, as no European woman had passed the gates that night.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE ZENANA.

WHILE her sisters were undergoing perils greater even than her own, though necessarily there was a sad similarity in all their thoughts, regrets, and sorrows, Polly Weston was still secluded in the Zenana, a large and oblong building, which adjoins the river front of the Palace of Delhi, and immediately overlooks the Jumna, as those who have been quartered in the cantonments must remember. Few of its windows open through that huge eastern rampart, and these are small and elaborately grated.

Immediately under the north-east angle of this edifice is the Sally-port Tower, wherein her father was still confined alone—yet not quite alone, for ever in his solitude the poor old man had always felt himself with God.

From one of the little windows of her apartment, which was situated at a vast height from the ground, Polly could see the bridge of boats that spanned the river, the quaint barges on the Doab Canal with their red and yellow striped sails, and their sides glistening in the sunshine. She could also see the roads that stretched eastward away towards Bareilly and to Meerut, once the scene of many a morning gallop and evening drive.

Along those roads came often the white dust that indicated the march of troops; yet so incessantly were these but the sepoy mutineers, pouring in to join their comrades at Delhi, that the gleam of advancing arms in the morning sun, had long since failed to excite the faintest hope of rescue in the young girl's breast.

To have a window which faced the country thus, was a special favour conferred on Polly, as those of the other ladies (among whom she had not yet been placed) looked but to the royal gardens, or the great court. Two large windows filled in with elaborate brass lattices, opened from Polly's room to those celebrated gardens; but, as she was an object of great curiosity to the other ladies of the household, who often promenaded below, she never looked in that direction.

The sight of the palace suggested only ideas of captivity—and worse; but the far open country suggested those of freedom and liberty.

She had a magnificent and airy apartment: the cornices and walls were of chunam—the finely pounded shell-lime of Hindostan. It was white as snow, and worked like plaster of Paris, into flowers, figures, and elaborate arabesques, painted and gilded with singular taste and delicate beauty.

Freshly gathered flowers, in gorgeous Chinese vases, and delicious perfumes from silver filigree bottles, were always around her; but the girl tossed feverishly and restlessly on her bed, the posts of which were lacquered and gilded with all the skill of some artist of Hyderabad, and the coverlet of which was of green cashmere, embroidered with silver threads.

Polly had long been in a low and nervous fever, which prostrated alike her mind and body, leaving her so much the shadow of her former self, and so completely without the charming roundness and brilliant bloom of English girlhood, that there were times when Mirza Abubeker seemed to be careless whether she lived or died; though his pride was still severely piqued by the aversion she shewed of him in her moments of perfect sense—aversion and obstinacy

to which he, as a prince, and the lord of the greatest zenana in India, was somewhat unaccustomed.

Even the blundering and superstitious hakeems, or doctors, who wrote verses of the Koran on a slip of paper, and washed off the words into a lotah of water, to be drunk by their patients, could not be admitted to the zenana; thus, fortunately perhaps, for Polly, nature was left to work out her own cure.*

In her ravings, when the disease was at its height, she often thought herself a little child again, at her papa's knee, reading the psalms and the lessons to him, and being taught her prayers in return; and the poor child—for such she really was—lay on that gorgeous Oriental couch, with her wan, white face, ill, feverish, sick, and heavy in heart, beseeching God to take her out of this world, as being too terrible a place to live in.

She remembered that to miss morning prayers

* Matters have changed since then in that part of the world. Each village has now a school, conducted by a Brahmin, with an allowance from Government. A school of medicine for females, is to be opened at Delhi—the inmates of harems not being allowed the visits of a male practitioner. Ten new journals have been started this year; seven of these are in Oordoo, and three in Hindee.—*Galignani, January, 1868.*

was deemed at home a great omission—her dear, good papa did not consider it a crime; but there were no morning orisons now, save those—and deep and heartfelt prayers they were—that Polly fashioned for herself.

The moment when they had been torn asunder by Baboo Sing and the matchlock men, was always vividly before her.

“My good papa,” she would sometimes say aloud; “that refined English scholar and divine, so suave and sweetly tempered to all; so kind, so meek and loving; a perfect Christian, so charitable, so sincere and so unbigotted, to be subjected to outrage at the hands of those horrible natives!”

A sharp and clever girl, Polly had picked up enough of the jargon called Hindostanee, to know what the people about her said; and she was sickened and disgusted by the incessant amount of religion expressed by them on all occasions, and by their unwearying profession of their faith, in using the preface to each chapter of the Koran, and so forth; and by talking perpetually of their creed, as if they—the Mohammedans—were the only faithful servants of Heaven in the whole world.

All this, after the atrocities they had committed, reminded her of the English puritans,

and still more of the Scottish covenanters (in Scott's novels), who slew their foes in cold blood, and quoted scripture most glibly while doing so.

But as the war was a religious one, the Bengalees were full of fiery enthusiasm for their castes and creeds, and were inspired by the most rancorous hatred of the English, whom they believed to be idolatrous pariahs, without either; thus vehement protestations of their various faiths were incessantly on their tongues.

Sequestered among the quaint and oppressive splendour of the Delhi zenana, though treated with every reverence and delicacy as the chosen plaything and toy of an irritable tyrant, Polly, when health or strength began to return, missed sorely the home—even the Anglo-Indian home—of her father's roof; and now the same terror grew upon her, that had tormented her sister Kate—that she might be left for ever in Delhi!

If—as she was hourly told—all her countrymen were really slain throughout Hindostan, (and she knew what a “handful” the Europeans were when compared to the millions upon millions of natives), and if she was never released and never could escape, what a horror to anticipate the slowly coming years of old age, in a

'dreary zenana, the object of envy and hatred to its other inmates.

Old age ! Oh, why was she not dead already ? Why was she recovering ?

There were times when a quiet and stern serenity took possession of Polly, and when she seemed to feel that an inexorable destiny had her in hand, and that Moslem-like she must endure and suffer, even unto the end.

Amid all her prayers and grief, there came to memory many episodes of novels and tales, wherein the heroines had been subjected to tribulation of various kinds. She remembered the terrible scene between Rebecca and the Templar in the Castle of Torquilstone, and wondered if, like the noble Jewess, she would prefer the arms of death to those of Bois Guilbert. Then she shuddered and closed her eyes, fearing that she lacked the stern courage of Rebecca ; but never had heroine of romance been in a more perilous predicament than she—poor little Polly Weston was now—in the hands of those unscrupulous Mohammedans.

Hideous and wanton old women again and again extolled to her, the manly beauty of the sleepy, sensual, and almost middle-aged Abubeker, saying often that he excelled even Crishnu, the Oriental Apollo, " the darling god of the

Indian women," as he is termed by Sir William Jones; and then they would twangle on their vinas, to songs of Zuleika (as they traditionally named the frail spouse of old Egyptian Captain Potiphar), and her passion for the Hebrew slave.

By no means to which they resorted could they rouse Polly from the intense apathy that succeeded her fever; she felt herself as if under that species of nightmare peculiar to a disturbed dream, in which the sleeper seems unable to escape or elude a pursuing monster, a falling rock, or other threatened danger; but her state appeared to be a permanent dream, from which there could be neither awaking or escape.

Save Abubeker, two men only visited her; one of these was the imam of the palace mosque, a venerable Mohammedan priest, who could remember the downfall of Delhi, and had seen Wellington at the battle of Assaye; he deplored the slaughter of the Christians—he even wept over it, but he could afford her no hope of escape. The other one, who always made her shudder, was the dancing dervish, Hafiz Falladeen.

As health returned, her naturally fine constitution and innate buoyancy of spirit came to her aid, and then Abubeker, to her torment, paid

many visits, to sit by her couch, for notwithstanding all the wasting consequent to her illness, Polly, with her little rosy mouth, and its dimple at each corner—that dimple called by the French *la fossette des Graces*—her small white teeth, her beautiful bust, like that of the Galatea of Raphael, and all her tresses of golden hair, spread over her pillows, seemed to his cunning and admiring eyes like a Houri of the Koran, enshrined “in her couch hollowed of a single pearl.”

“If I do not speak blasphemously,” said he one day to the dervish, when they were together in her apartment, “she is like the Hur-al-oyun, who are created not of clay, as mortal women are, but as the blessed Koran affirms, of musk, and devoid of all blemish or defect.”

“And yet, most high,” said the dervish, grasping with his nervous fingers his lathee, which had done some ugly work in the late revolt, “she is the child of an unbeliever; but God is great! He extends even mercies to the Kafirs.”

“She is a veritable Peri,” resumed the prince, with an air of gratification, between the puffs of a fragrant hookah, which two little slave girls prepared and placed beside him; “a Peri! she is

more like the Peri-banou—the queen of all beautiful spirits.”

“She *was*, rather say, Mirza Abubeker,” replied the dervish, thinking of her as the bright girl whom he had seen in her father’s carriage, or riding on the course, when he had sometimes received alms from her hand.

“I thank the Prophet that as yet Azeezun has not concerned herself about her,” said the prince, for though a tyrant in Delhi, he was a very slave to the said Azeezun, his first wife, who is said to have often smote him on the mouth with the heel of her slipper.

Aware that they were talking of herself, the wan and sickly girl turned her soft and languid eyes to each in turn.

“Ah! pretty one, Nour Mahal, as I called you in jest, but not the less truly,” said the prince, in pure English, waving his fat dark fingers, which sparkled with diamonds; “eye of lotus-leaf, and cheek of tulip, why so coy and severe with one who loves you as I do?”

“Who loves me—an old married man—the odious idea—how shall I speak to the wretch?” thought Polly, gathering courage, however, on hearing him speak English; but she only shuddered and closed her eyes, on which glances of

anger were exchanged between the dervish and the Mirza.

"Listen, girl," said the former, in his harsh and guttural Hindostanee; "he who speaks is great among the men of the earth, and brave as Rustam, who fought the White Demon of Shirauz! Rustam, indeed—compared with Abubeker—whose dog was he?"

(Erelong we shall have occasion to show what the sepoy's thought of their prince's valour).

Polly only struck her thin white hands together, with an expression of weariness and intense disgust.

"Now, by the soul of Solomon, you are unwise and over-nice for a Feringhee girl—a white-faced mem sahib!" said the prince, with great irritation of manner, as he flung from him the amber mouth-piece of his hookah, and thrusting his hands into the cashmere shawl which formed his girdle, regarded her gloomily. "Has it never occurred to you that instead of doing you the honour to admire you as I do, and to save you as I have done, you might have become the slave of the lowest caste Hindoo—a dog who may have stooped to cut grass and carry water for the horses of the hated Europeans and Eurasians?"

"But, my lord," urged Polly, in growing fear at this change of manner; "I have long known that you have a wife already."

"I have *three*," responded Abubeker, with a quiet laugh at her simplicity.

"And would wish a fourth?"

"To please you, I shall have a fourth."

"Ah, me—a fourth—ah, good heavens!" exclaimed Polly.

"Praise be to God, and his bountiful Prophet, our religion permits us to marry four."

"I always knew that, my lord," replied Polly amid her dismay, blushing in spite of herself; "but it cannot be—it cannot be, for so far as I am concerned—pardon me—but indeed, indeed I would rather die."

"Feringhee girl," said Abubeker, with growing sternness of manner, "do you think that Heaven sent you into this world to please yourself?"

"No, my lord."

"No—who then?"

"Alas! I know not," sighed Polly wearily, as her tears began to flow.

"Shall I tell you?" asked the other, impatiently.

"If you choose, my lord."

"Then you came into this world to please *me*," was the confident reply of Mirza Abubeker.

CHAPTER V.

NEWS FOR POLLY.

IN vain were presents and ornaments of enormous value, and such as India only could produce, heaped before Polly Weston; in vain were embroidered dresses, the most wonderful of Delhi needle-work, the bright silks of China, the muslins of Dacca, the soft shawls of cashmere, purses of mohurs, bracelets, necklaces, girdles, and brooches of baubool and champae, with bangles and rings, in which glittered sapphires, emeralds, and diamonds, the very dross of the Orient, laid at her feet: Polly was listless, heedless, absorbed, and barely bestowed on them a vacant glance.

She longed only for death, or for restoration to that which never more could be as it had been—her broken home and her father's protection; to her sisters and all their friends, and to Dicky Rivers, with his fun and laughter, and half

schoolboy slang, picked up at Addiscombe and Brompton Barracks.

"Poor dear Dicky—we were such friends," she would murmur; "and he loved me so—may I not say he loves me still? ah, if in life, assuredly he yet loves cousin Polly!"

Where was he, and where their orphan charge, little Willie, now? It seemed ages since Willie wept, with his rosy face buried among her skirts, for his dead terrier, Gyp, and since the little cur had been buried among the oleanders by Phil Ryder, of the 32nd.

"She weeps incessantly!" said Abubeker, impatiently, to Hafiz Falladeen, on leaving her one day.

"Time will cure all."

"But this silly grief retards her recovery—and she is most wearifully sad," urged the prince.

"Then endeavour to amuse her, most high."

"It is our pleasure to be amused—not our task to amuse," was the haughty reply.

"You know the language of her people—now let us hope, the language of the dead; tell her stories to make her laugh."

"To make her laugh," echoed the prince, disdainfully.

"Tell her the 'Tales of the Parrot;' you know

Persian, and can read them. Tell her of the Princess of Babel and the two musicians—how the celestial traveller, like Harut, sank into the well of Babel, and of the white-robed Peri, who left the couch of Pharoah, to enlighten the magicians of Hindostan; tell her of the laughing fish, and the sea-drinking crocodile; tell her—”

But here the dervish paused, for a dark frown had gathered on the face of Abubeker.

“Who am I, to amuse a Feringhee girl—a slave?” said he, in growing anger; “but in three days, I shall visit her again, and if she still weeps, woe to her!”

“I would speak, but I know not her language; moreover I seem to terrify her.”

“It is that disgusting serpent you carry about with you, Hafiz, thereby acting like a vile cur of a Hindoo, rather than a follower of the Prophet,” said Abubeker, as he turned away.

More practical than the prince, the dervish brought jugglers and serpent-charmers to amuse her; but in vain were the most remarkable feats of these tricksters—the most wonderful of their class in the world—performed before her.

A little active Hindoo, from Meerut, balanced a cane on his nose; a small tree surmounted it, and thereon were perched forty tiny birds, which

chirped or were silent, according to his order, and which he ultimately shot in succession by pellets like dried peas, emitted upward from a pipe placed between his teeth, and all the while he was traversing the garden walk on two rings or hoops of polished steel, each a yard in diameter.

He gave place to another, who kept eight balls of polished silver revolving in shining circles round his head and shoulders, with marvellous rapidity. Then in his further attempt to amuse—for gold was plentifully promised if they could make her laugh—he received from Polly's hand a little piece of white paper, which he dexterously fashioned into the form of a butterfly, and then by the waving of a palm branch, he made the mock insect alight on the edge of her fan, on the bough of a tree, on the petal of a flower, or wherever he wished.

Then came two brothers from Hydrabad, terrible fellows, who swallowed swords and bayonets, and vomited fire, which seemed also to issue from their nostrils and ears; others there were, who raised an orange tree, in full bearing, from a seed, in a vase of water, by simply clapping their hands, and who, on throwing an apparently solid cocoa-nut to a great height in the air, received it in falling, directly on their own caput, from

whence the milk, as the shell split, flowed over their shoulders; and the last juggler performed that astonishing feat which is so familiar to the people of Madras—by balancing himself on a bamboo pole, thirty feet high, and wheeling round upon his stomach, with a velocity fearful to behold; but interest and curiosity, or the power of being amused were alike dead in Polly, now, and she looked wearily on, as one in a dream, or sometimes she closed her eyes.

Lastly came a serpent charmer, with a basket of snakes on his back, and a wooden pipe and brass lotah at his girdle—a wiry, lithe, and supple looking little fellow, wearing a red turban and cummerbund of the same colour, for he was the identical personage whom we have seen in the forest of Soonput, and elsewhere.

He lured the snakes from his basket as he played on his pipe, and made them dance and wriggle their green, golden, and purple folds round his neck, legs, and arms, while they opened their scarlet jaws, and made their hoods distend, and their wicked eyes protrude and flash, as they crested their heads above his turban—one of them being the now fangless Brahminee cobra, from which he had saved Lena Weston, when asleep.

During this performance Polly's apathy suddenly deserted her, and gave place to animation;

her eyes sparkled, and a flush came over her cheek. She half-raised herself among the pillows on which she was propped, and beckoned the snake charmer, at whose neck she had detected an ornament attached to his rosary of rough brown beads.

It was the fragment of a regimental badge, with the Queen's cypher and the number '32' upon it.

"Oh, where did you get that?" she asked, eagerly.

"Eik sahib logue," replied the charmer.

"Where?"

"Hiding in wood."

"Where—oh where—what wood?"

He pointed to the north.

"What was his name—Harrower or Temple?"

"I not know—mem sahib with him—give me this," he added, showing a gold bracelet on his right wrist. "I save her from snake—dam Brahminee cobra—give drink from lotah, water of nuddee—faint—ill—better, ver much well—shabash! shabash!"

Polly uttered an exclamation of mingled hope and joy, and in doing so, her voice seemed strange to herself! She recognised the bracelet as one which was habitually worn by Lena, for it had been a birth-day present from the doctor; and

from this man, in his disjointed jargon, she gathered the story of the episode in the forest of Soonput, with nearly all its details, and deduced from it that Jack, strong, gallant, "big" Jack Harrower, (as she used to call him) and one of her sisters—Lena, certainly—were together, and, so far as she knew, in safety!

He shewed Polly the horrid Brahminee cobra, and the brass lotah, from which the poor pale "mem sahib" had drank, and the vessel seemed precious in the girl's eyes. This man had saved her sister from death—from a poisonous serpent, and she cast towards him two or three of the purses of mohurs that lay near her, as if she loathed the coins and would gladly be rid of them.

"Brahma bless thee with the water of life!" cried the fellow, though a low caste Hindoo, as he hastily concealed the precious mohurs in his cummerbund. He took especial good care to say nothing about his subsequent proceedings, in conducting the armed rabble to the ruined tomb in the forest, and their pursuit of Lena and Harrower; but she could make out that through his friendly care and guidance they had found safe shelter in the house of the zemindar Kunoujee Lall.

"Oh that I was with them!" she exclaimed,

with a gush of yearning, "I thank you for all this, my friend—from my inmost heart—from my very soul, I do!"

The wily serpent-charmer withdrew, in possession of more gold than he had ever thought of handling, even in his wildest dreams of acquisition; but the exclamations of hope and joy now uttered by Polly speedily brought the prince to her side, and in the fullness of her heart, the poor girl told him of the discovery she had made, and under all the circumstances, a most unwary disclosure it proved to be.

Abubeker in good and well-chosen English, expressed his extreme satisfaction, and went straightway in search of his brother, who was in the Dewan Khana, surrounded by a brilliant staff of sepoy officers, some in scarlet uniforms, others in glittering Asiatic dresses of silk and velvet, radiant with precious stones. Many powerful chiefs of Oude and Delhi were present, and there too, were Baboo Bulli Sing, Mohammed Bukt Khan (a soubadar) then general of the artillery, and Colonel Pershad Sing, who seemed somewhat ill at ease.

Mogul was receiving reports of fresh revolts extending almost to the gates of Calcutta, of slaughters everywhere from Lahore to the Bay of Bengal; of newly arrived troops, and he was issuing

orders for their camping, for the levy of contributions and so forth, but with a languid and indolent manner that was but too apparent to all.

These royal brothers were so much alike in their sleepy and effete aspect, in their yellow or golden colour of skin, their curve of moustache and almond shape of eyes—eyes, alike cunning, cruel and licentious—in their obesity and years, their bearing and even their attire, for they wore the same pattern of shawls, vests and turbans, that a stranger might have had some difficulty in knowing which was Mogul, and which Abubeker.

A brilliant flash sparkled in the eyes of the former, when the latter informed him in a whisper, that the eldest daughter of Doctor Weston—the pale one with the dark eyes—was concealed in the house of the Zemindar Lall, she for whom he had searched all Delhi and offered in vain a hundred mohurs of gold !

It was in consequence of this information, that the file of troopers under the naick, in the guidance of Gunga Rai, appeared in the night at the gate of the zemindar, and their return was impatiently awaited by Mogul, whose wrath on finding them arrive alone, and on hearing the subsequent intelligence brought by the fakir, was on

the point of being very dangerous, as he was not in the habit of having his wishes thwarted, or his orders trifled with.

With his forehead bent before Mogul till it touched the floor of the Dewan Khana, the Corporal timidly ventured to assure him, that with his two troopers, he could have done nothing against the strong wall of Lall's fort, and the two pieces of cannon which were opposed to him.

"True—but instead of two troopers, you should have taken twenty."

"Most high, I did but obey the orders of the Rissaldar," faltered the naick.

"Was it Kunoujee Lall who actually refused to deliver them up?" asked Mirza Mogul, who sat crook-legged on his royal chair, with his jewelled fingers resting on his knees, outspread, and twitching nervously with anger.

"No, most high," replied the soldier quailing under his cruel and angry eyes.

"Who then?"

"His brother—late the soubadar major of the 15th Bengal Infantry."

"And *he* refused, the unclean dog?"

"Absolutely."

"And since then they have escaped?"

"It would seem so, most high," said Baboo

Sing, coming forward to the intense relief of the trembling corporal, who thought perhaps that duty was easier done under the Feringhee officers after all; "the Hindoo fakir reports, that the white sahib of the 32nd Regiment, and a mem sahib, undoubtedly a daughter of the Padre Weston, disguised in Afghan dresses, and attended by the soubadar major, left the fort before day-break, all well mounted."

"For whence?"

"Jehangerabad, he believes."

"Disguised as Afghans, say you?"

"Yes, most high," replied Baboo, salaaming low, for there was a terrible frown in the face of Mogul; "and a zemindar of Oude, Nour-ad-deen, Abraha al Ashram, on his way hither to join the army, passed three persons, answering to their description, in a wood near the Jumna. He had some suspicions, and would have tracked them, but the horse of one of his two followers was destroyed by a tiger—so they may have dangerous companions in their neighbourhood."

"Can this zemindar of Oude be trusted?"

"He is true as Damascus steel, most high, and none more than he resents the plan of the queen of the Feringhees to wed the chiefs of Oude to the widows of her dead Crimean infidels—a project which, as your highness knows, Azimoolah,

Khan and I—praised be the prophet! discovered when at Stamboul last year, and which—”

“Enough! and those three fugitives have taken the way to Jehangerabad—shabash! they can easily be intercepted!”

“Already a havildar and twelve of the 3rd Light Infantry, have departed for that purpose, guided by one who overheard and saw their flight—the Fakir Gunga Rai.”

“A filthy Hindoo dog!” muttered the prince.

“But most true to you and to our cause, most high,” urged Baboo timidly.

“Well, well, so be it; we may as well use him as another—’tis our destiny. If overtaken, when shall the prisoners be here?”

“To-night—the lady—”

“If not disfigured or mutilated, goes straight to my zenana—peril of your heads, remember that.”

“And the sahib?”

“As you please,” yawned Mogul, “give him to the people, and they will soon make an end of him.”

“But there is the soubadar major—he is a Hindoo.”

“Take him at daybreak to the Nusseer Bastion and blow him from a twelve pound gun, as a warn-

ing to all recreant sepoys ; and see that the whole of the 15th Regiment are present under arms."

"Shabash—on my head be it," replied Baboo as he salaamed and retired.

Then giving the dervish all the hairs that had been combed out of his royal beard that morning for interment in the earth (as like all Moslems, he had a profound veneration for his hirsute appendage) Mirza Mogul, with another capacious yawn, broke up the divan, and with a slouching gait, withdrew to his zenana.

CHAPTER VI.

TRUE TO HIS SALT.

WE left Lena, Harrower, and Bhowanee Lall, closely pursued by the party which had been sent to intercept them on the road to Jehangera-bad.

Not a moment was to be lost in effecting the passage of the stream, which was broad and deep, and roaring fiercely down between its banks of rock, over which some old palm-trees drooped, and where the thick impervious jhaw jungle was hanging.

So far as he was personally concerned, Harrower would not have shrunk from plunging in his horse; but for Lena to attempt to swim herself across, would be but to court instant destruction.

At a glance—a glance of agony—he saw the situation in all its details; the careering river, the

impending rocks, the white foam bells surging past, on the opposite bank, an old shattered tower of the Bheels, through two gaping windows of which, the yellow sunbeams shot aslant, giving the ruined fragment the aspect of a gigantic and grotesque head, with two eyes glaring down on them.

Behind were the galloping hoofs of horses and the yells of the pursuers, three of whom had far outridden the rest, and were close upon them now.

"To the right," cried Harrower, whose sharp eye detected a rope bridge across the stream—a mere rope by which a kind of basket was suspended; "to the right, and we may baffle them yet!"

It was more than two hundred yards lower down the stream, and where the banks were equally steep.

"Lena, our horses outstrip yours—take mine—take mine and leave me!" cried Harrower; "I'll meet these men on foot, and you must trust to the good soubadar major."

"Never, Jack, never!" replied Lena, in a tone of anguish not unlike his own.

"God bless you for this devotion, my dear girl," said he, in a husky voice; "but while there is yet time, take mine, I implore you, and

reach the bridge. Your horse will sink under you."

"On, on ; don't stop, Jack—in the name of mercy, don't rein up !"

"These scoundrels are gaining on us—do you hear—do you hear?" cried Harrower, in growing despair; "lash, lash that lumbering artillery brute, Lena! Quicker, for pity's sake—for my sake, if you can."

"Oh! Jack, I am almost sinking."

Lena rode in front; the soubadar major was behind her, and Jack was in the rear of both, for the footway by the river was a mere narrow track, and could only be traversed with extreme difficulty.

"There is yet time, I hope—you must cross by the bridge, Lena—we by the stream, as best we may."

"By the bridge!" echoed Lena, as she saw the slender black line of rope running from rock to rock, appear between her and the sky.

"I shall empty a saddle or two if I can—by Heaven I shall!" exclaimed Harrower, who saw that the pursuit must be vigorously checked at all hazards now; "come, soubadar major, let us face about—fire our pistols, and fall on sword in hand, in the smoke!"

"We shall perish — it is our kismut," said the half breathless Bowhancee Lall gloomily.

"Let my fate be accomplished here, if God wills it; I care not if she only escape those dark bloodhounds; and yet—oh what may be her future! To the bridge, Lena, to the bridge and cross, while we cover the rear!"

A glow of heroism mingled with the rage that swelled in Jack's heart, as with clenched teeth and knitted brows, he wheeled his horse about.

"We are but two to a dozen," said Bhownanee Lall, as he shortened his reins and drew his sword.

"Well—the more danger, the more glory; however, as yet, we are but two to three, and here they come in Indian file."

In this order, succeeding each other, the three sowars came tearing at a gallop along the narrow path by the river, while their nine comrades, with horses completely blown to all appearance, were still at a distance, when Harrower rushed forward to meet them. The first and second were only a horse's length apart, and came on with flashing eyes, and features animated by fury and fanaticism, and to which, the trident of Vishnu, that each had painted just above his nose, lent an expression of grotesque ferocity.

Both fired a pistol each and then betook them to their swords.

By making his horse rear by a vigorous application of curb and spurs, both pistol shots were escaped by Harrower; one bullet lodged in the neck, and another in the chest of the poor animal, causing it to plunge wildly; but Harrower's powerful arm soon controlled it, and goading and goring it on with the spurs, by a backhanded cut at one assailant, and a "point," given home at the second, he rid himself of both, and hurled them bleeding and gasping from their saddles, amid the jungle, from which the swarms of insects were rising in black and buzzing clouds.

His horse and that of the third sowar came crash against each other, for the path was so narrow that to pass was impossible.

He caught the uplifted sword of the trooper as it descended by a most successful ward, and ere it could be followed by a thrust, the blade of the soubadar major was passed through the man's body with terrible force, and in a moment his saddle, too, was empty and his horse galloping away

"To the bridge now—to the bridge!" cried Harrower, and a few bounds of his staggering and dying horse brought him to where Lena, in her saddle, had witnessed, with a heart swollen by dread and anxiety, the brief conflict—the

terrible scene of five men engaged in mortal conflict, and three lying now in the agonies of death.

Harrower's sword, his right hand and arm were covered with crimson stains, and there was, for a moment or two, such an expression as Lena had never seen in his face before.

The rope bridge was simply a strong line laid across the chasm through which the river rolled at its narrowest part, which was some thirty feet broad. The ends were secured to the root of a date palm on one side and to a strong stake on the other, and were passed over two tripods of wood about four feet from the ground, to prevent the rope from chafing on the rocks. A strong basket, or cradle on rollers, traversed it, and by means of this primitive flying bridge the ryots and farm people of the neighbourhood had been wont to pass and repass the river since the stone edifice had fallen down, and it was simply one of those contrivances by which an adventurous and rural people supply their wants through means that in more civilized districts would be deemed fool-hardy and needlessly daring.

Harrower, in silence, lifted Lena from her saddle, and placing her in the basket seat, implored her in moving terms to preserve her presence of mind, to hold firm by her hands and

arms to the rope, and then with something between a prayer and a farewell on his lips, he shot it by its rollers, with all the strength he could exert, along the swinging line, and far beyond the centre of the stream.

Lena, who had often seen similar bridges for crossing the Doab Canal near Delhi, had to do the rest for herself by urging the cradle, which she could do with ease, as its rollers revolved freely, along the rope, on which, with an instinct gathered from the despair of her terrible situation, she pulled with her delicate hands, and while not daring to trust herself with a glance at the water which was surging past below, she swayed her body along until the other side was reached.

Then, no sooner had she touched the ground, than Harrower, who had again mounted, called something to her as an adieu, and with two cuts of his sword, slashed through the frail and primitive means of communication.

The rope fell plashing into the stream, and the cradle which had traversed it was in an instant swept away amid the foam.

"Harrower! Harrower!" she exclaimed, kneeling down with clasped hands on beholding this, "leave me not here—I wish to die with you!"

"My heart and soul are yours, Lena," he

cried, transferring his sword for a moment to his bridle hand, and waving kisses to her; "and now, soubadar major, once more to face or to fly from those accursed Pandies."

With horses blown, but still at a good pace, the havildar, the fakir, and the other troopers were coming on, and through the openings in the flowering shrubs, and between the great stems of the lofty date palms they could be seen now almost within pistol range, yelling and brandishing their swords in fierce impatience to avenge the fall of their comrades, and win the promised mohurs of Mogul.

"Chulo, bhai, chulo, bhai!"* they were shouting from time to time, as in their ardour one or other took the lead on passing his fellows.

Harrower, who had no desire to meet if he could avoid them, was now seen by Lena to turn his horse up the path by the side of the stream past where the three troopers in their silver grey uniforms were lying amid the jungle grass, throwing up their hands from time to time in those agonies which they cared so little to inflict upon others; and crouching on her knees, she watched him with an intensity of feeling that seemed to turn her to the rigidity of stone.

* Come on, brother, come on!

As a Parthian adieu she saw him discharge both his pistols in quick succession at the advancing sowars, hook up his sword to his waist-belt, and with a whoop, like a cry in the hunting-field, plunge his bleeding horse into the stream at a place where the opposite bank was less steep and rocky.

The soubadar major did the same, but his horse "turned a turtle" under him, and he had barely time to get his feet out of the stirrups, when bang—bang—bang—came a volley of carbines, as the bank they had quitted was lined by the Light Dragoons, firing in quick succession. Their bullets tore up the water into tiny white spouts, or whistled sharply across the stream, and were flattened out in stars on the opposite rocks.

Lena saw Harrower's horse, after struggling in vain, endlong and broadside to the current alternately, finally sink beneath him, either with loss of blood, or because another bullet had struck it.

Next, she beheld the soubadar major throw up his hands with a shrill cry and half leap out of the water, as a ball pierced him somewhere, inflicting a mortal wound.

"Oh, god of Terror," he exclaimed in Hindostanee; "Seva, god of Terror!"

There was another ringing volley of carbines;

she saw Harrower make a similar sign, with a cry as of agony, or farewell, or despair, or of all these emotions combined, and sink beneath the surface, which was redly tinged with blood; and as the pale smoke of the discharge curled up through the gorse and jungle that fringed the rocks, and the feathery branches of the palms that drooped overhead, she saw the two bodies floating past with a swift and gliding motion.

That of the soubadar major lay with the face downwards in the water, but Harrower was on his back, and as he was swept away head foremost, she could see his thick dark mustache, his beard now of many weeks' growth, the paleness of his complexion, as the uck-root dye was nearly all washed off by his immersion, and she could also see his curly hair floating in the stream.

One glance at all this, and the whole scene whirled round. She was on her knees; she heard the yell of triumph with which the double deaths were hailed, and heedless that perhaps they would take immediate means to cross and capture or destroy her, she fell from her kneeling position forward on her hands, then her head sunk on the turf, and there she lay, long insensible or incapable of thought or action.

* * * * *

Her last reflections as the sense of utter weakness and intense desolation passed over her, were like those of the "Stranger."

" ' Oh, God—oh, God—there is another and a better world !' Ah, why did I ever love that man Rudkin—how think that I did so ? What miserable and insane weakness made me false, even for a moment, to a heart so true and noble as this, that I have lost for ever ! Poor Jack—dear, dear Jack Harrower ! And he died for me—he died for me ! "

And so she lay there in a species of stupor, while the survivors of the detachment, in two parties, led by the havildar and the fakir, divided, one riding up the stream, and the other downwards, in search of a bridge or ford, by which they might cross and capture her.

They had probably some difficulty in discovering either, for nearly an hour elapsed, during which Lena saw and heard nothing, but the agile monkeys, who grinned and chattered, or swung by their tails from the branches overhead, and seemed as if they understood and mocked her misery ; but she was alike oblivious of them, and of huge and horrible flying insects, the green bugs, which hovered about, and even nestled in her hair. These creatures do not bite,



however, and are chiefly repulsive from their size, colour, and odour.

After a time, she began to wonder where all these sufferings and terrors were to end, and what fate had in store for her next; and her senses were compelled to rally, and her perceptions to quicken, when she heard footsteps approaching in haste, grating on the gravel, and the crashing twigs and branches, as they were impetuously torn aside.

Then with a scream of wonder, blending with a cry of mutual joy, she saw Harrower—Jack Harrower appear before her, alive and well, untouched and simply dripping wet.

Without a wound, he had only feigned death, as he hurriedly told her, to deceive the sepoy, and make them cease firing. He had succeeded in escaping them thus, but the poor soubadar-major had perished beyond a doubt, with three bullets in his body, a victim to Seva, the destroyer, but in the end, *true to his salt!*

CHAPTER VII.

ONCE MORE IN THE WILDERNESS.

"Oh, Harrower, where shall I find words to express my joy for your safety, and to thank you for saving me, and at such a frightful risk to yourself, too!" was the exclamation of Lena, as their hands were clasped in each other's at once.

"How am I to thank you for feeling all this interest and pity?" responded Harrower, with his eyes full of admiration, of ardour, and the hope which her present manner inspired; "you said you wished to—to die with me——"

"True; in the terror of that awful moment, perhaps I did," said she, withdrawing her hands and looking aside; "at such moments we cannot choose our words."

"And so, out of the fulness of the heart, the mouth will speak—is it so?"

"I don't know."

“Let us say no more of dying—would it not be better to *live* for me?” urged Harrower; “but come,” he added, on seeing that her face clouded, and on remembering the line of conduct he had adopted, “we shall talk of all this at another time; those fellows are no doubt after you still, so we must be ready for them, and to quit this place besides.”

Necessity and prudence rendered his revolver his first care, and while he rapidly cleaned and reloaded it, the unconcealed joy of Lena for his restoration to her, and for his perfect safety, made him feel intensely happy for the time.

There was then a singular brightness over Jack’s features, for he had been front to front with great peril; he had well-nigh passed through the valley of the shadow, and all unscathed by wound or scar, as he stood before her, his face seemed absolutely beautiful to Lena in its manliness; yet it was but the embrowned and well bearded visage of a sturdy Englishman.

There was a colour in his cheek, a depth of passion in his eyes of violet-blue, expressive of ardour, earnestness, generosity, and the most tender love. The ladies had often found a difficulty in determining the exact hue of Jack’s

searching eyes; some called them grey, while the others termed them blue, and girls whom he neglected, to flirt with others, voted them plain green; but Lena, more correctly deemed them violet.

"If he would but ask me now, to love him again, I could not choose, but accept him," thought Lena, as she bent her eyes on the grass, with a heart full of many emotions, in which gratitude was certainly not the least.

But Jack, with all his great love for her, remembered the bitter mortification of the past, the vanished years, when he had relinquished his leave of absence, and returned almost heart-broken to India; and he had no intention of pressing his suit, as he had once done lately, and Lena's final words, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of our first volume, were still fresh in his memory.

"In a little valley near this," said he, "I observed a dense grove of beautiful trees, not far from a house that seems deserted, there we must remain concealed till night comes; and then we must seek for food and further shelter _____"

"But where to find them, Harrower?"

"Where Heaven may direct us, Lena; for my own part, now that the soubadar-major is gone,

I have not an idea of whereabouts we are, or of anything save that danger is ever near, and the future dim and obscure."

She sighed deeply as he took her hand, and led her from the bank of the river, urging her to a quicker pace, lest the pursuing cavalry should reappear.

"They bowled out the poor old soubadar-major, certainly; but we settled four of them in fine style—the scoundrels!"

"Oh, Harrower; don't speak of it," said Lena, shuddering.

"A deuced selfish party, is that old fellow, Kunoujee Lall."

"Perhaps he could not help it—he was compromising his family, with those terrible men in Delhi," urged Lena.

"I wonder what he will think when he hears of all this."

"He will sorrow for his brother's death, doubtless," said Lena, thinking of her own griefs.

"He'll smudge his elegant face with the trident of Vishnu, pray to his monkey god and his four-armed idols, and then doze off comfortably with his hubble-bubble in his mouth," said Jack, who had few sympathies with the natives now.

"My poor friend, those soaking things will kill you!" exclaimed Lena, with deep concern, as she surveyed his Afghan dress, which clung to him.

"But I cannot take them off just now, Lena," he replied, smiling, "though I know that in India agues and so forth are the very devil; but the sun will soon dry them—and I have luckily a drop of something in my flask here."

Fortunately for Harrower he was a man of iron frame and matchless constitution, otherwise his ducking in the river might have proved a serious affair to him, in such a climate.

"I thought my career was about to be finished in another fashion, after I got out of the water," said he.

"How, Harrower—by the cavalry?"

"They were still hovering about the right bank of the stream, looking for a place to cross, when I swam under some jungle that overhung the rocks on this side, and got safe footing, unseen. I had then to creep under a fragment of impending rock—an enormous mass of marble—and judge, Lena, of what I endured when I felt it *vibrate* above me! I lay still under the cold rock for a moment or two, scarcely daring to breathe, ere I ventured to move again. I was in terror of being bruised to death, or of being half

crushed, and compelled to lie there, incapable of extricating myself; of being discovered by natives if I ventured to shout for aid; of being devoured when half or wholly dead, by alligators, or by wild animals, such as jackals, tigers, and hyænas; of being reduced then to an unburied skeleton! By Jove! my dear girl, in the vibration of a pulse, a pendulum—so rapid is thought—I lived the agony of a lifetime! Making a bold effort, I dragged myself through, and the moment I did so the impending mass of rock closed, hard and fast on that which lay below. I found myself safe and free, but in a little nuddee, or water-course, along which I crept for a time, until I made my way back to you.”

Without experiencing alarm, or being seen by any one, they reached the grove, or rather a little valley, indicated by Harrower. It was a lovely spot; its sides were clothed with the wild cotton-trees, which are first covered with crimson flowers, that fall off and leave a bursting pod, filled with snow-white down; and there, too, grew the tall tattooon, with its leaves of shining green, and its clustering fruit, like the olive, with a sweet kernel; and the umbrageous russa, a rich and beautiful tree, with flowers of crimson and yellow; while along the little secluded vale there flowed a rivulet, which shone like a silver thread,

when the sunbeams, that poured in one broad flood of golden light along the vista, kissed its gurgling current.

It was evident that in the rainy season—there are only *three* in India, the hot, the cold, and the rainy—this place became a mere *jhil*, or morass.

In the distance shone the white marble dome of a temple, built by “Hindoo Stewart,” an old General of the Company’s service, a Scotsman, who had come to India so early in boyhood, that he had forgotten all about his kirk (as most of his countrymen do when out of Scotland), and even of Christianity, and betook him to the worship of Brahma, Vishnu, and Seva, saying his prayers among their believers, as many an old Bengal officer may remember, content, as he was born without caste, to begin in the next world at the lowest grade.

Harrower found a pleasant place for Lena, where they might sit completely hidden among the embowering foliage, and talk over their plans, while the sun drew westward, and evening approached.

In their disguises, he was not without a hope of achieving their original purpose, by reaching the Ganges, getting on board a boat by force, fraud, or bribery—how, he cared not—and then dropping down with the stream to some British

station, to which they could never travel by land at present ; but in the first place food and sustenance were required, for the kernels of the tattoon, a few of which he had gathered for Lena, formed but an indifferent meal.

Remembering what had occurred, when on a similar errand he had left her once before, he was loth to run the risk of visiting the deserted house he had seen close by ; but if the essay was to be made, he knew that it must be attempted ere darkness fell, for he had seen many vultures hovering about the spot, and shrewdly suspected how and why the mansion, evidently the property of some wealthy Indigo factor, was empty and abandoned now.

It was distant less than a mile from the valley, so, leaving Lena his pistol as a protection, and taking with him only his sword, he departed on his errand of discovery.

It was a square, two-storied, and white-plastered villa, surrounded by a broad verandah, supported by handsome pillars of cedar wood ; between these were the mattings, usually hung for coolness, to be soused with water by the chup-rasseys, from pipkins of clay ; but they were all in rags and fritters now, and waved mournfully to and fro on the wind. The approach was through a gate, in a dense, prickly pear hedge ;

but the former lay unhinged on the walk, which passed through a beautiful garden, where the most gorgeous flowers of India were blooming in all their beauty, but unheeded and untended now.

The windows were open and gaping, the glasses smashed, and the green Venetian blinds knocked to pieces, so Harrower entered with an aching heart, for though the house seemed to have been "looted," and half demolished, but a short time before, already its chambers had become nests of centipedes, scorpions, and even vultures, which sailed slowly out and in at every opening. Everywhere the great spiders had been busy, for a week or two had evidently made terrible desolation.

On the consoles the gilded clocks were standing still ; on the tables the flowers had withered and decayed in their vases ; gloves, bonnets, and torn female dresses, were strewed about, with photographs, engravings, English books, "The Railway Library," and leaves of music, that fluttered in the winds of Heaven, as they careered through the open and deserted mansion—deserted by all save the dead, whose remains were lying on the floor of a room in a ghastly heap, as Harrower could see when he passed it, with a shudder of rage and hatred, for there the bayonet and the terrible tulwar had been at work, and in one

hecatomb all seemed to have perished together.

In one room, on the floor, overturned, lay a pretty little berceaunette, with its white muslin drapery and lace canopy, tiny and delicate as a marriage bonnet ; but stained and bloody. Near it lay a baby's shoe, of red morocco, and a coral rattle ; but where was the baby, and where was its mother ?

What hopes, and fears, and tears of joy, had been inspired by the idol of that little shrine, that was empty and blood-stained now !

There was a hoarse malediction, mingled with a vow, on Harrower's lips, as he struck the point of his sword into the floor and turned away. Had he looked from the window, he might have seen the remains of a white woman tied by ropes to one of the orange trees in the garden, with the vultures flying around her ; but luckily this revolting feature was spared him.

It was near this house that the mutineers from Paniput had marched en route for Delhi. They were chiefly Mohammedan cavalry, and it was by people of their faith that the greatest outrages were committed, and that the Christian women were most barbarously used, during the great mutiny.

Harrower felt his heart sicken as he found

himself in what had once, doubtless, been a happy English home, reduced now to an Indian charnel house. Once he thought of hastily quitting it, but he had so long been face to face with this kind of work, and remembering the pressing necessity which brought him there—and that Lena was starving on his hands—that he made his way by chance, rather than instinct, to what had been the larder or pantry of the *Khan-samah* (or butler), but the *sepoys* had been there before him, and its contents had nearly all become *loot* or were wantonly strewed about.

There, however, he was lucky enough to procure some coffee, and the sugar that is extracted from the palmyra and cocoa-nut tree; a few biscuits, or hard and dry chupatties, and a small ham, which the fine religious scruples of the plunderers had prevented them from touching as unclean; he also found a bottle of wine, and a small tin vessel, all of which he tied up in a handkerchief, and then hastened from the house, with something of compunction in his heart, as if he had been robbing the dead; but the living required all his care, and households such as that he had shudderingly quitted, were scattered then by thousands over all Bengal!

“Here are riches—here are the spoils of war,” said he, cheerily, on rejoining Lena, to whom he

only imparted the half of what he had seen ; but he had regained the sheltering grove just in time, for a few minutes after, the light grey jackets of the 3rd Cavalry were visible, as the havildar's party, on their homeward way, filed past the end of the valley, leisurely, at a trot—their search after Lena having proved fruitless. Their swords were sheathed now, and their carbines were slung. Some Hindoo peasants, returning from the fields with their bullocks, which they use when ploughing, harrowing, or threshing, also passed leisurely on their way to rest, so his escape from being seen was a narrow one.

The wanderers were still in that woody and unfrequented district which lies north-west of Delhi, stretching away for miles upon miles of wilderness and leafy waste—the forest of Soonput Jheend. With his fantastic clothing dry, his weapons ready, and nearly as much provision as he could carry, Harrower felt that his spirit would have become more buoyant, and that he might have been able to achieve much for himself had he been alone, and Lena in a place of safety ; but now, he had again to tremble, lest an illness, consequent to the dews of the Indian nights, might fall upon her.

He became very silent, and full of thought.

“Why so sad?” she asked, kindly touching his arm.

“I was only thinking,” said he, with affected cheerfulness, “that after a little more of this savage wandering, we shall be fully qualified to appreciate the domestic life of the Zulu Kaffirs, or of the Feejee Islanders.”

Lena was about to reply, when a sound arrested her, and made Harrower spring to his feet. Another sound followed, and he laid a hand on his sword. The first was the sharp twang of a cavalry trumpet; the second was the barking, or rather the hoarse baying of a dog.

“Can they be on our trail, and tracking us with dogs?” was Jack’s first alarming thought; if so, there was no time to lose, for the baying was on their side of the river, and also near the rivulet that traversed the beautiful little valley.

“Up, Lena—up—we must be off, my poor friend—my dear girl—exert yourself again!” he exclaimed, as the voice of the dog and the trumpet sound were heard again, and most alarmingly near. Then taking her hand, he led her down the slope, and over the rivulet, crossing and re-crossing it several times, to baffle the scent of the hound, if they were indeed followed by one.

The sun had set with its usual Indian rapidity; day had suddenly given place to night, and the

clear round moon, like a mighty pearl set in blue enamel, shone on the far extent of flat landscape, but nothing to cause further alarm was visible; and, after a time, the sounds they heard died gradually away.

Harrower afterwards discovered that they were caused by a body of revolted cavalry, on their way from Scharunpore to Delhi, whose trumpet had been sounding to recal plundering stragglers; but so great were his alarm and anxiety lest they were actually being tracked by the party under the havildar and the Fakir Gunga Rai, that he continued to follow an old and narrow path which led up the left bank of the rivulet, half supporting and half dragging his faint and weary companion, for three or four miles, nor did he stop until they found themselves once more amid what was unquestionably the utter solitude of a portion of the forest of Soonput, and only some thirty miles or so nearer the Ganges than when in their former place of concealment, the old tomb where the Shere Afghan and the father of Nour Mahal lie.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SHELTER.

A LITTLE of the wine found in the desolate villa, restored Lena's wasted strength, and they continued to proceed in the hope of finding a banian or some other great tree, for shelter from the heavily falling dew. If disposed to loiter, sounds in the wood, like human voices, rather than those of wild animals, urged them wearily on from place to place, along their uncertain track, for there a meeting with men would be as perilous and unwelcome as with the beasts of the forest.

There was much that was strange, wild, and fantastic in their being cast thus together, day after day, these two lovers, who had been parted by evil influences, and who, though re-united, were not yet reconciled; and but for the great heroism, the gentle and brotherly kindness of Jack Harrower, it might have proved a very

awkward situation for Lena ; but they were as the two last survivors of a shipwreck, clinging to the same spar, or floating on the same raft, at the mercy of Fate, the waves, and the wind.

Jack saw nothing romantic in their position, for there was nothing of romance in his nature ; he was thoroughly practical, and, as he stumbled on through the long jungle grass, he sighed—as only an inveterate smoker can sigh—for a single cheroot, or for his favourite meerschaum (a pipe from Lippe Detmold, the bowl of which he had been browning to his own satisfaction) and for the ample bag of cavendish, which had been in his bungalow, when his effects were confiscated by that estimable valet, Ferukh Pandy.

“ I wonder,” he thought, “ if I shall ever have the pleasure of punishing that rascal.”

In its rank luxuriance, the wavy and feathery jungle grass was so long, that in some places it might have hidden an elephant ; but they were pursuing (without guide or object, save a dry shelter) a kind of beaten track through it, whether made by the feet of men or wild animals, there was no possibility of determining, and on both sides, the grass stretched like a green and reedy sea, beneath the intertwined branches of the enormous trees.

“ No wild boars here, I hope !” said Harrower,

"I've had many a pleasant day's pig-sticking ; but to meet a boar here now—"

"Don't even think of such a thing," said Lena in an imploring voice ; "but what sound is that?"

"Something most unpleasantly like a human voice," replied Harrower in a low tone, while pausing, and with knitted brows looking round him anxiously.

"If so, it comes from a great distance," said Lena, sinking her voice to a whisper.

"Surely those devils of the 3rd Cavalry have relinquished their search—besides, horses would make but little way here."

Athwart the forest glades, the moonlight poured in bright streams of pure and liquid light, and the dew gemmed everything with diamond lustre. Monkeys, black and brown, were leaping from branch to branch ; wild peacocks and other birds of brilliant plumage, roused from their nests, by the appearance of the wanderers amid that utter solitude, winged their way through the overarching foliage, with a swiftly gliding, or a heavily flapping sound, according to the size and fashion of their pinions.

As they proceeded, the wood became more open, and then Lena grasped Harrower's arm with both hands, exclaiming—

"See—yonder is a wild elephant—nay, there are two !"

Standing amid the grass, which was barely two feet high, in that place, they saw distinctly two large dark elephants, with their heads turned towards each other, but quite motionless, with their long trunks and flat pendulous ears hanging down.

Harrover uttered a loud hunting shout, which the forest repeated with a hundred echoes ; it was done by a sudden or uncontrollable impulse, and was most impolitic, as he knew not whose ears it might reach ; but it seemed to alarm only the monkeys, who scrambled about with increased celerity, while the birds fled from tree to tree. However, the giant quadrupeds never stirred, and another glance on a nearer approach, shewed that they were hewn of stone !

And now a second, a third, a fourth, and many more appeared in succession, ranked in a double line, about twenty feet apart, with their heads turned inward. In short, they were an alley, an avenue of stone elephants, all alike in size, and carving, forming the approach to the ruined Hindoo temple of Soonput Jheend, the quaint and lofty entrance to which, was looming dark and huge at the extreme end of this great vista of statues.

Athwart those vast and solemn figures that stood so still, so terribly silent amid the solitude, the light of the Indian moon was streaming in all its silver splendour ; one half of each elephant was clearly defined in the sheen, the other was rounded off into shadow, and shrouded in obscurity.

"How beautiful—how magnificent !" exclaimed Harrower, breaking a silence that was oppressive, for though not romantic, he had somewhat of an artist's eye, and could handle his pencil well.

"Magnificent truly," added Lena in a low voice while still drooping on his arm ; "but how solemn, Jack—how awful and solemn !"

And something there was indeed solemn, touching and humbling, even terrifying to the heart, in the vastness of these ruined works of art—the mighty temple of a past time—the great effort of human pride and fanatical enthusiasm, the scene for ages of a thousand dark and barbarous rites, standing there amid the solitude of the vast Indian forest, forgotten and though decaying, yet apparently imperishable, as the rock hewn shrines of Ellora or Elephanta.

Such remains are scattered over all that wondrous land. "History is altogether, and fable almost silent as to the authors of those works of taste and magnificence," says a writer ; "they

are forgotten, and the memory of the arts which they practised has perished with them. The monuments they have left now adorn a desert, which nature, as if in scorn of man, seems to pride herself in decking with joy, by the colours and fresh odours of every delightful shrub and flower, whose Author can never be mistaken."

A light cloud covered the bright moon, involving this singular avenue in complete shadow; the brightness of the forest was dimmed, and a gloom spread over its vistas. For a time, Lena would not advance, even though the dew was becoming most oppressive; but anon the cloud passed away, the moon came forth again in all her glory to light this place of wonder, and that double row of stony phantoms, the huge backs of which were shining with the moisture, that dripped from every herb and tree.

Lena was almost sinking now, when Harrower conveyed her into the ruined temple, discharging a chamber of his revolver as he did so, to scare forth any wild animals whose lair it might be.

A tremendous echo replied.

Ere its many reverberations from the recesses of the edifice died away, there was a rushing sound, and a tempest seemed to pass them, as scores of birds whose nests were in the carvings of the

cornices and capitals, fled, with strange cries and outspread wings into the forest.

Up several steps, broken, decayed, and covered with grass and herbage, and between pillars of twisted, bulbous and fantastic form, they passed, Harrower leading the shrinking Lena by the hand, until he found a stone, or fallen column on which he seated her, while preparing to make a fire, that they might look around them and see the features of their temporary habitation—the vast memorial of unknown ages, and of a mental darkness that is yet undispelled in the land.

Dried branches, dead leaves and so forth, were lying there literally in cart-loads, just as the forest winds had blown them in; a heap was soon collected apart from the rest; a cartridge was then untwisted, and the powder spread over it. Another discharge of the revolver and the fuel was fired; it sprang up in wavering flames, and Harrower continued to throw on heap after heap, till the ascending blaze lighted up the whole place, round which he looked with growing interest and Lena with unconquerable fear.

This temple—one of the many magnificent Hindoo fanes, rifled and ruined by Mohammed Ghora during his conquests in the twelfth century—is of vast extent and height, and out of the

ghostly uncertainties of its depths and shadows, there could be seen, coming forth in bold relief, while the light of the fire wavered and brightened redly on them, several pillars of bulbous outline, with flat oval capitals, and many gigantic stone figures, whose heads supported the roof; and when the unsteady glow played on their huge and grotesque faces, these seemed to become animated, and to grin, mock and jabber at the intruders; yet the whole scene, in all its details, its bold features, its black obscurities, and unknown history, was calculated to impress the mind with awe.

Even practical Jack Harrower felt its solemn influence stealing over him; but that did not prevent him from perceiving, that in a recessed part of the edifice, was an inner gallery, supported by a row of smaller pillars about eight feet high. To this place a series of ledges, or steps, gave access, and therein he placed Lena, on a couch of dry soft leaves, as being more secluded than the outer temple, where he heaped more fuel on the fire, and then seated himself near her, on the ledge of stone, a few feet below her impromptu couch.

She was reclining with her left hand under her cheek; she stretched out her right to him, and he pressed its soft fingers between his own in silence,

and thus they sat for a long space hand in hand, looking sometimes at each other, and sometimes at the fire which burned brightly on the paved floor ; at the quaint pillars, at the quainter figures of the Hindoo idols, hewn out of marble or porphyry, on which daubings of red paint were still traceable ; at the symbols on the walls, where the bull of Brahma, the serpent of Seva, the trident of Vishnu and the noose of Kalee, were reproduced in innumerable carvings : and then they turned to where, away beyond the outer peristyle, in the moonlight which seemed so pale, and cold, and blue, when contrasted with the red, glowing fire in the foreground, they could see the dark and sombre avenue of stone elephants, and the glorious vista of the forest, receding into distance and a silvery obscurity, far, far away.

The scene was one of wondrous grandeur and picturesque beauty—of silence and solemnity, and so much was Lena oppressed by a sense of it, and by all she had undergone, that while the clasp of her soft and trembling hand, tightened in that of Harrower, she began to sob heavily and covered her pale face with her veil and sleeve.

CHAPTER IX.

RECONCILIATION.

"LENA," said Harrower, tenderly, while placing an arm over, but not around her, and then quickly withdrawing it, "why do you weep so?"

"I don't know, Jack."

"Not know, Lena? After holding up so bravely, until we have found a safe shelter—"

"Unless it be, that I am thinking of Delhi, of Meerut, and those who have perished there and elsewhere, in this horrible country."

"Be calm—you have borne up with genuine spirit—you have shewn the courage and prudence of a perfect heroine, Lena, so do not give way now—but continue to be the brave girl you have been."

"I shall try, Jack—we have certainly been spared through many, many perils, have we not?"

"Such as I never thought to encounter or survive, in my wildest ideas of military service, or most fantastic visions of adventure when a school-boy at Rugby—perils too, that I never could have thought, once on a time, to have shared with you, Lena."

"Oh, Jack," said she, after a pause, in a low and tremulous voice, and evidently making a great effort with herself; "Jack, I loved you once—you believe me, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Harrower, in a husky tone, becoming a little bewildered by the sudden turn the conversation was taking, "once certainly, Lena Weston."

"Yes—before that man came between us, and I acted like a silly coquette—an idiot girl; but he assured that I never loved you then, dear, dear Jack, so sincerely as I love you—*now*!"

"Lena—Lena Weston!" he exclaimed, as he threw an arm round her, and bent his face close to hers; "is this avowal true—am I to be rewarded at last?"

She placed a hand caressingly on his neck, and touched his cheek tenderly with her trembling lips.

"I love you, Jack—forgive me, and I shall never err again."

All her heart had gone forth to him at last,

and Harrower covered her face and hands with kisses.

And now there welled up in their hearts, all the more keenly, isolated and lonely as they were, and apart from all the world they had hitherto known—this wealth of passion, this subtle yearning that had been growing in Lena's soul, and which Harrower's had never lost, for he, the blunt Cornish squire and practical soldier, had ever loved her with the devotion of a knight of chivalry.

It was their old love of the pleasant days at Thorpe Audley, but changed into something more devoted, with more of stern reality combined with its romance, than at one time they could have understood.

A long but delicious pause ensued, during which he sat on one of the steps below the gallery, with her hand clasped in his, and still laid caressingly over his neck and shoulder.

"Then, dearest Lena," said Harrower, "you will be mine after all—mine, after all these miseries and perils are past?"

"Shall they ever pass?" she asked sadly.

"They must—they shall!" was the emphatic reply.

"But we may not survive them."

"We shall—please God—we shall; but say

you will be mine—whisper it in my ear, be it ever so low, Lena. There, my beloved; lay your head upon my shoulder, as of old, in the happy times at Thorpe Audley—in the deep, shady English lanes, in the church porch, and by the trysting stile. Oh, Lena, Lena, turn your sweet face to mine, and repeat that you love me again, as you loved me then—then, in the dear old days at home!”

“What more would you have me say—what more than I have said?” she asked in an imploring tone.

“True—I am unreasonable.”

“I know that your heart, never in thought or deed, wandered from me; and left so much alone as I have been of late, ample time has been given me for reflection, thus I resolved to avow what you, I fear, would never say to me again, three simple words, that tell—*I love you*. I am yours, Harrower—my dear old Jack, yours only, and for ever!” she whispered through a burst of tears, with her pale face, slightly flushing now, though it was hidden in his neck.

So at last the truce was ended; again he was hers, and she was his!

These three words expressed the sum of all their happiness, and yet neither could tell where or how, whether even in life or in death, the

morrow's sun might find them, for they were still fugitives, fleeing for their existence ; so circumstances shed much of anxiety and solemnity over the joy of their complete reconciliation.

Lonely and blighted now, the last of all her race and family—as she deemed herself, she clung all the more tenderly and helplessly to Harrower, her kind, loving, and forgiving Jack Harrower.

Of the hopes and fears that were passed, and of those which were to come, they conversed long that night ; but Colonel Rudkin's name was never mentioned. That portion of the last few years, in which he had figured, was tacitly committed to oblivion.

Harrower frequently replenished the fire, and after a time, Lena, notwithstanding that her mind was so full of thought, overcome by weariness, dropped asleep, while he sat watchful and anxiously on guard, with his arms beside him—it seemed that now, he had, if possible, a greater treasure than ever in his keeping.

So passed the night.

Harrower procured in the forest—close by the entrance of the temple—some mangoes, the rich juice and substance of which, formed a pleasant morning repast in so hot a clime, and plantains also were to be had in any quantity, for the mere trouble of gathering them.

With the thermometer at 110°, the atmosphere of the vast temple was cool and pleasant; and therein, they were safer than they really knew of, as it was a place that none went near, being one of those spots said now, by the superstitious Hindoos, to be the abode of the mysterious *yogis*, a kind of fakirs, who are supposed to live in the caves of the mountains, or in solitary ruins, without food or raiment, and in a state of abstraction from the entire world, for hundreds of years.

Desolate and desperate though their fortune, in some respects, to Lena and Harrower,

“The situation had its charm.”

for a term, but a brief term only, for on the second day of their lingering there, the sound of human voices was heard most unpleasantly near their lurking place—so near that they retired into the darker recesses of the gallery, which opened along the back, or inner wall of the temple, affording complete concealment behind the great pillars and caryatides, or huge statues, the heads of which we have said upheld the roof.

Such a successful termination to his love affair, after all its changes and turns, Jack Harrower could not at one time have foreseen. They had parted in sorrow and anger, with tears and reproaches,

in a sequestered green lane, near the quaint old Rectory of Thorpe Audley—parted, as they thought, never to meet again—when the autumn leaves were lying thick under hedge and tree; and now they were reunited, lip 'to lip, hand in hand—but where?

In a Hindoo temple of Bengal—far, far away, amid the savage wilderness of Soonput Jheend!

So he had not only won back Lena Weston, but had re-won her with a love, by many degrees more intensified than the first passion of her girlhood at Thorpe Audley.

That he had done so, was his constant and exultant thought; but would he yet be able to save her? Would they yet be spared to each other, in a land where so many were daily perishing?

A whole day he spent in calculating, or considering, as closely as he could remember it, the line of flight proposed by Bhowanee Lall towards the Ganges; but when he contemplated the distance to be travelled by Lena, without a horse, a palanquin, or other means of easy conveyance, his heart sank completely, and he knew not whether to turn, or what to do! “If it be true that without some enthusiasm nothing great was ever achieved, and nothing permanent ever fulfilled,” what greater causes for it could a man

have, than those which now inspired Jack Harrower? The honour, the liberty, and the life of his promised wife—the love of his youth!

During that day no voices were heard in the forest, but it did not pass without a petty alarm, for the sound as of some person breathing heavily—snoring, in fact—was heard very audibly; but where, Harrower could by no means discover.

Then a stone, which became detached from a portion of the gallery or recess, fell heavily down, almost at his feet, after which all became still as before.

CHAPTER X.

HARROWER'S STORY.

PERCEIVING that these two unaccounted-for incidents greatly disturbed Lena, and served, together with the gloomy aspect of the place, its vastness, fantastic carvings, and repulsive figures, to render her nervous and terrified, he endeavoured to amuse her by adopting a lively style of conversation, and even by relating anecdotes—though story-telling was not much in Jack's way.

"This remarkable temple," said he, "reminds me of a painting I have at home, of one in which my grandfather, when he served in the Carnatic under General Stuart, discovered a French sergeant almost dying of wounds and the consequent loss of blood, but whose life he saved; and who in future years became a king—what do you think of that, Lena?—the king of one of the first countries in Europe!"

"Is it history or romance, this, Harrower—a story you are inventing to amuse me?" asked Lena, smiling faintly from the couch of leaves on which she was reclining, for now she was almost past being interested by anything.

"Actual history, I assure you."

"But how did it all come about, Jack?"

"Thus, as I shall tell you," said he, retaining her hand in his, and seating himself, as before, on the steps that led to the pillared recess, where she reclined. "It was in the June of 1783, when the French troops, under the Marquis de Bussey, made a vigorous attack on ours, then commanded by General Stuart, on whom the duty of leader had devolved after the death of Sir Eyre Coote.

"Stuart had taken up a position to the south of Cuddalore, a town near the Bay of Bengal, and though the Treaty of Peace had been signed between the two countries, there were then no P. and O. liners on the Red Sea, no telegraph wires, no steamers from Marseilles to Cairo, so the stout old Scotsman knew nothing about it for months after, and at the head of his kilted Highlanders, his Madras Infantry, and camel-batteries, he pressed the siege of the fort with such vigour, that he soon killed six hundred of its defenders.

"The brave de Bussey—the representative of one of the finest old families in France, and of

that Louis de Bussey d'Amboise, who figures in the history of Marguerite of Valois—failed to raise the siege, and suffered heavy losses.

“My grandfather, then Major Harrower, served on the immediate staff of Colonel Wangenheim, who commanded the Hanoverians, and they had both remarked a young sergeant of the French 54th, or Royal Marine Regiment, who distinguished himself by repeated acts of bravery, as the troops of the Marquis de Bussey fell back in disorder. Driven at last, with a handful of men, into a Hindoo temple, the party defended themselves against Highlanders and Hanoverians till they were all shot down or bayonnetted, including the young sergeant, whose white uniform was stained with the blood of many wounds. But Major Harrower saved his life with extreme difficulty, and being a powerful man—all we Cornish Harrowers have been big fellows, Lena—he bore him forth into the outer air.

“‘Your name, my brave lad?’ asked Colonel Wangenheim.

“‘Jean—Baptiste—Jules—’ was all he could falter out, when he fainted.

“But so much were the Major and Colonel interested by his manner and appearance, that they ordered him to be conveyed to their own quarters, where he was treated with every care and consi-

deration, until his wounds were completely healed.

“The young sergeant informed them that he was a Bearnese, a native of Pau; that he was well educated, and had been intended by his parents for the study of the law; that his mother’s fondest ambition and hope were to see him a Councillor of the Parliament of Paris; but in boyhood he had heard too many warlike stories of his countrymen, Gaston de Foix and Henri IV., under the shadow of whose castle he had been born; so preferring the more perilous career of a soldier, in his sixteenth year he had enlisted in the Regiment of the Marines, and that in nine years time he had been promoted to the rank of sergeant.

“‘I shall never forget the debt of gratitude I owe to you, Monsieur le Colonel, and also to you, Monsieur le Major,’ said he, as he bade them adieu, with tears in his eyes, and a little bundle slung over his shoulder, at the end of a stick, ‘and I shall teach my mother at home in France, to remember you both in her prayers. Happily, messieurs, our nations are now at peace, but it may yet be in my power to repay, in some manner, to a poor countryman of yours, the great kindness you have bestowed upon me—Ser-

geant Jean Baptiste, of the Marines of King Louis.'

"Years afterwards, when my grandfather had turned his sword, not into a ploughshare, but into a heavy shanked hunting-whip, and retiring from the service, had settled down into an old fox-hunting, Cornish squire, he read how in June, 1803, the French invading army, under the great General Bernadotte, had marched into Hanover, when George III. refused to recognise the neutrality of the German States, and that among those who attended the levee of the conqueror was his Indian comrade, General Wangenheim, then an aged officer, venerable by years, by wounds, and service, his breast covered with the stars and medals of many a memorable field.

"The French General received the veteran with great distinction, shook him repeatedly by the hand, and observed him with marked attention.

" 'Monsieur le General,' said he, with kindly interest; 'you have served a great deal, I believe?'

" 'I have served His Majesty the king of Great Britain and Hanover, for more than half a century.'

" 'And in India, I have heard?'

" 'Yes, monsieur,' replied the fine old German

officer, modestly ; ‘ I have served there—but that is more than twenty years ago now !

“ ‘ You were at the siege of Cuddalore, in the Carnatic ?’

“ ‘ I had the honour,’ replied Wangenheim, with growing surprise.

“ ‘ Have you any recollection of a French sergeant whom you and another officer saved from the bayonets of the Scotch Highlanders, in a Hindoo temple, and whom you took under your protection, on the retreat of the Marquis de Bussey, from the heights southward of the city ?’

“ ‘ Yes, Monsieur le General—a sergeant of the Royal Marines of the late King Louis. I do remember him—a brave young fellow he was, but of course I never heard of him more.’

“ ‘ That sergeant has now the honour to address you—I am he—and I beg to testify, before all these gentlemen, how much I shall rejoice if I can in any mode repay the humanity and kindness you bestowed upon me, during our campaign in the Carnatic.’

“ ‘ You, General—you that sergeant—Jean—I remember now : Jean Baptiste—’

“ ‘ Jean Baptiste Jules Bernadotte, the runaway boy from the mountains of Bearn. When taken prisoner, I had been too weak probably to

mention all my name. At the Revolution the Marines made me their colonel.* You shall dine with me to-day, General, and learn from me, how we, the children of the Great Republic, may spring in a short year—yes, even in a month, from the private's musket to the marshal's baton!

“General Wangenheim was caressed by Bernadotte, and received every mark of favour and honour he could bestow upon him while the French troops were in Hanover, and before the veteran was borne to his last home in the church of Neustadt, he had lived to see the young sergeant of Marines created the Marshal Prince of Ponte Corvo and King of Sweden and Norway on the abdication of Gustavus the Fourth.

“And now, Lena, for tiffin,” added Jack, with a smile, as he concluded, and went to that part of the edifice where he had placed the provisions; “a drop of the Cabul wine, and a biscuit.”

He paused in a bewilderment that was very pardonable, for both the wine-bottle and the chapatties had mysteriously disappeared in the night!

* On this taking place, Bernadotte's first act was to set at liberty all the Royalist officers of the Regiment, and restore to them their swords and crosses of St. Louis.

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE THE WINE AND CHAPATTIES WENT.

ALARM and surprise—utter astonishment, indeed—were the emotions that mingled in Harrower's mind on discovering this singular abstraction.

He had never gone further from the temple than down the avenue of statues to reconnoitre, or to gather a few mangoes, so no one could have approached the place or entered it unseen by him or by Lena.

The foot-print discovered by Robinson Crusoe in the sand of this lonely island did not create more alarm in the mind of that celebrated navigator, than did the disappearance of their viands in the hearts of the two fugitives.

"Musk rats may have taken the chupatties," suggested Lena, with a tremulous lip and a very pale face.

"But not the bottle of wine," he replied; "a

biped of some kind must have taken a fancy to it."

"Can one of those huge adjutant birds have stolen it unperceived by us?" said Lena, pointing to the *argils*, those great and ravenous herons (so venerated by the Brahmins) which were now perched in numbers on the stone elephants outside the peristyle.

"I have heard of *other* adjutants who were fond enough of wine, Lena, but the idea is quite impossible of execution—alarmingly so. We have certainly had a visitor."

"It must have been an invisible one."

"No, Lena; ghosts don't steal wine."

"But when or how could any one have entered here?" she asked, looking fearfully round.

"That I am utterly at a loss to determine; but when I remember the voices heard in the forest from time to time—the stone that fell so oddly—but hush! what is that?"

He laid a finger on his lip as if to impose silence on himself, and a dark frown gathered on his fine expressive face, as he drew his revolver from its case and cocked it, for a sound that seemed to come from the gallery, or open recess at the back of the temple, struck his ear.

It was exactly like that which is caused by a match being drawn sharply on a stone or other

rough surface for the purpose of ignition, and a gleam of light for an instant came out of the darkness of the very gallery where he had made up a couch of leaves for Lena.

She, too, had heard the sound and seen the light, and shrunk close to his side.

"I'll be hanged if there is not some mysterious party lurking in the back part of this place, and out I must hook them at all hazards," said Harrower, alike resolute and practical; "we can't protect our front unless we know how the rear is situated."

"God help us, Jack!" mourned Lena; "how long are we to endure terror upon terror—trouble after trouble?"

"How can it be otherwise, Lena, in a land where every man's hand, and every woman's too, is uplifted against us, and where the very children would rend us like hyænas if they could."

He pressed her hand, whispered a word or two to reassure her, and with his sword drawn and pistol cocked, he sprang into the gallery, and crept softly in the direction from whence the light had come.

Immediately behind a great and mutilated statue of Seva, from which the four arms were broken or had fallen off, a colossal figure the entire height of the temple, he found that an

arched passage opened at a right angle from the gallery, and after various turnings (full of dust in some places, of leaves and accumulated soil in others) led into a kind of vault or chamber, where the sunlight shone cheerfully through a square opening or window. The place must have been an appendage of the temple, formed for purposes known only to the priests who had worshipped there ages before the days of Mohamed Ghora.

Harrover peeped in and saw with surprise a richly attired Indian—to all appearance a Zemindar of Delhi, seated on the floor, leisurely puffing a cigar, with the missing wine-bottle by his side, and his right hand resting on the neck of it, while he gazed contemplatively at the blue patch of sky that was visible through the aperture, which was so small and situated so high up in the wall, that he could not have found entrance by it in any way.

This personage was well armed; a brace of pistols and a dagger, all of exquisite workmanship, were in the Cashmere shawl which formed his girdle, and close at hand lay unsheathed a formidable tulwar, or broad-bladed Indian sabre. His blue cloth vest was elaborately embroidered with gold and beautiful needlework in bright coloured threads; precious stones were sparkling in his turban, and every way he seemed an

Indian dandy, though powerfully yet handsomely made. His figure was lithe and active, and singularly enough, for a native, he was seated, not with his legs crooked under him, but stretched at full length, with all the air of a free and easy lounge. Harrower could see only the side of his dark face, which was of a deep yellow, the high class Indian colour, and that he had keen dark eyes, enormous black whiskers and a beard.

Still keeping his pistols cocked and ready to shoot down this most unwelcome Oriental with as little compunction as if he had been some obnoxious reptile, Harrower, to his great surprise, suddenly heard him exclaim, after a most capacious yawn—

“Oh, holy St. Bridget of Egypt, who was forty-one years in the wilderness without having even the smallest communication with mortal man, but here’s a pretty piece of botheration! How am I to get away while these niggers are watching me there without? I wonder how many there may be; bedad! if I thought there were only the two—and this wine—the unbaptised blackguards!” he added, taking a long pull from the bottle; “it tastes like capital mess Madeira. Oh, murder and millia murder, but it’s a poor case entirely! A Rookawn of niggers,

maybe, in that place beyond there, and I have only six charges of ammunition left, and a bad leg too—the devil's in it for sport, say I!"

Ere Harrower's astonishment and relief of mind permitted him to speak, the other resumed his musing—

"I think I could sing 'Aileen-a-Roon' to keep myself cheery, if those beastly fellows were only farther off, or would get out of that for good! Niggers, indeed!—and the creatures to be drinking wine like this. I wonder if they have any more of the same bin?"

And he sighed as he took what proved to be a final draught from the bottle, set it slowly down, and replaced his cigar between his teeth.

"Ahoy, my man—why who on earth are you?" asked Harrower, coming forward.

"Ah! what the devil's that!" cried the seeming Indian, with great sharpness, as he sprang agilely to his feet, sword and pistol in hand, and with extreme surprise surveyed Harrower, who almost laughed aloud, as he recognised an old friend.

"What, is it you, Doyle," he exclaimed, "Pat Morris Doyle, of the Bengal Fusiliers?"

"Hurrah!—the Lord be good to us! You are Europeans like myself—only disguised—"

"As you are, my friend," said Jack, shaking

him warmly by the hand; "don't you recognise us?"

"The devil a bit!"

"You can't have forgotten us—Harrower, of the 32nd, and Miss Weston—poor Doctor Weston's daughter; we have been lurking in concealment since that horrible night of the retreat from Delhi."

Starting back, Doyle, who was a devout Catholic, was about to make the sign of the cross; but suddenly changing his mind, he grasped the speaker's hands, exclaiming—

"Harrower—so it is Jack Harrower, of the 32nd—a singular meeting this, old fellow! especially in this land, where there have been so many sad partings. *Pater noster qui es in cælis*, but here's a pleasant surprise! You and Miss Weston in the wild woods together, like a couple of Nebuchadnezzars — it's mighty droll, any way!"

"Droll? It is enough to fill us with despair, Mr. Doyle," said Lena, as she presented her hand.

"How did you recognise me in this dress, and with a visage dyed 'dark with the luminous bronze of a southern clime'—artistically-used tobacco juice?"

"Doyle, I would recognise you among a thou-

sand, by those wild Irish eyes, and that splendid brogue of yours. You would make a capital Othello as you look just now. Do you remember my 'make-up' for our amateur theatricals, at Allahabad?"

"And you and Miss Weston in those long dresses—I don't know what you look like, unless it be Aladdin and the beautiful Princess of China; but such a gallant beard you have cultivated!"

"Thick as jungle, Pat."

"Yes—jhaw-jungle, decidedly," said Doyle, laughing. "Oh! by the Trout of Kilgavower! but this adventure beats Banagher; and so *you* were the two natives I was so frightened of? What a muff I have been—and I stole your wine—the Madeira, or whatever it was—"

"*Was?*" queried Harrower, glancing at the bottle.

"Yes—it's mighty sorry I am; but we must speak of it in the past tense, for it's gone—clever and clean, every blessed drop!"

"We have been concealed in this district, northward of Delhi, ever since the massacre. A native officer, the late soubadar major of the 15th Bengal Infantry, procured us these disguises, and they have not as yet proved very successful."

"How so?"

"Daily we have been in danger of our lives ; and how Miss Weston survives all she has undergone, I know not."

"Aye, aye," said Doyle, while his eyes gleamed, "we have heard of dreadful doings at Lucknow, Benares, Cawnpore, Allahabad, and everywhere else. In thousands the poor creatures have perished by the cold steel, by thirst and starvation—God rest their souls in peace !"

"But from whence came you, Doyle, and how did you enter here, unperceived by us ?"

"I came from Meerut last."

"Meerut !" echoed Lena, while her colour changed ; but Doyle hastened to assure her, with great delicacy and commiseration of manner, that he was totally unable to afford her information of any of her friends, save Rowley Mellon.

He rapidly told them of the night march, or rather the flight of the fugitives, to Meerut, where the 60th Rifles and the Queen's Dragoon Guards protected them ; and then of the subsequent affair with the Pindaroons.

"Some weeks after that," he continued, "by permission of Brigadier Graves—accompanied by Rowley Mellon, who was in dreadful anxiety about his wife and her family—I set out for Delhi, that city of murder and devilment. We

were both disguised as zemindars of the district, the spoil we found among the Pindaroons furnishing every accessory. We were anxious to discover the fate of our friends, but we had orders also to fulfil; these were to reconnoitre the strength of the enemy, and discover what we might of their future intentions."

"And, dear Mellon," asked Lena, with her eyes full of tears, "oh! Mr. Doyle, where is he?"

"Be composed, dear Miss Weston, though I fear that what I must tell will distress you."

Lena clasped her hands, and raised her sad eyes to heaven.

"Near Tahurpoor, when almost within sight of Delhi, a rascally fakir, named Gunga Rai, who used to loaf about the cantonments, overheard us speaking English, and betrayed us to a body of mutineers, on the march from Bareilly. We had to trust to our horses' heels, and luckily we were well mounted; but the dirty spalpeens, who were cavalry, pursued us with great vigour, wishing to enjoy a little shooting, or take lessons in carving at our expense. Among some mango topes we got separated in the night. I think Mellon may have got safely into Delhi, for the whole rookawn of the Pandies pursued me; but as I know the country here about as well as if I owned it—

having shot and hunted over every inch from Kurnaul to the Ganges—I gave them all the go-by in beautiful style, clearing everything as it came, just as if I rode to hounds, and made straight for the forest here; but, by the powers! my troubles weren't over yet. I fell in with some Dacoits, or other thieves, who next pursued me, and shot my nag under me, a grey mare it was, but a mighty troublesome brute, whose tail was longer than her temper. While the thieves busied themselves with the contents of my port-manteau, I got clear off, just as the night was coming on, and made straight for the temple, though followed and watched, as I thought, by two of the band, from the nuddee, near a ruined villa."

"We certainly were in that quarter, but saw nothing of you, Doyle."

"I could see you plainly enough, and tall and formidable your figures looked in these long Afghan dresses. More than once I cocked my pistols, to have a little practice at you; but happily I thought better of it, and hobbled on. My left knee is well-nigh useless, for my nag fell on it. I crept in here, for I knew the place well, having often tified in it with Mellon, when pig-sticking in the forest; and, overcome by toil and utter prostration, I have slept in this den for nearly four-and-twenty hours."

"Then it must have been you, whom we heard snoring so melodiously, as to cause us the utmost perplexity?"

"Devil a doubt of it. About daybreak this morning, I was creeping out to have a peep in the forest, when I saw my two Afghans still scouting in the outer temple—one asleep, and the other watching pistol in hand. I thought of my bad knee, and mighty had it is, Jack. I drew back softly, and took the bottle of wine. It was a rash act may be, but I was too thirsty to be very particular. In retiring, I kicked a stone with my foot, and when it fell close to yours, by St. Patrick, I thought all was over with me! What a joke! I had little idea 'twas from friends I was borrowing. Why, with the ham, the chupatties and the wine, we might have had a jovial little picnic on the sunny green sods outside. But such a lark—such a story all this would seem, if told to some of my old chums at Trinity, and other good fellows in Merrion Square. The Doyles of Clonmoney have many a queer story told about them in the county Carlow; but though house burning and head breaking were the smallest things laid to our charge, I never heard of one putting on the turban before—the devil's own caubeen it is. These fine togs as I told you, are the spoil of the Pindaroons," added Doyle, who seemed in ex-

cellent spirits, to which, no doubt, the contents of the wine bottle had greatly contributed. "You may imagine, Miss Weston, that it was mighty soothing to our feelings and conscience to have a little free work with the bayonet among those darkies after we reached Meerut; but by my faith! Malachi, with his collar of gold, Con, of the hundred fights, or blustering Phil Doyle of Ballinasloe, never come through so many cursed adventures as I have done, since that night, when we bolted from Delhi in the dark!"

"If you have such a thing as a cigar about you—," Harrower was beginning.

"That's my last cheroot, Jack," said Doyle sadly, as they came forth from his hiding-place; "and ere long it's out of temper I'll be, as well as tobacco, for with a regular smoker, the two things are inseparable. My last cheroot! oh! Lord, it's in a bog-hole, or well nigh as bad, that I'll be by this time to-morrow."

"Not at all, Doyle—think how long I have been without the soothing weed."

"Ah!" replied Doyle briefly, with a swift but scarcely perceptible glance at Lena—a glance, which, had it been seen, would have provoked Jack, and made her blush, for his eyes were full of mischief; "the sins of a jolly sinner are easily forgiven, as father Molloy at Kilgavower used to

say to his niece, though he never forgave that Scotsman for stealing the trout from the holy well ; and so you forgive me for taking your wine—an only bottle too. Well, I thought I'd hit two birds with one stone ; cure my own thirst and save a true believer from breaking the laws of his prophet, and so committing what the poor creature thought a mortal sin."

CHAPTER XII.

UNWELCOME VISITORS.

THOUGH a member of a good Irish family, and being a well educated student of old Trinity College, Dublin, Doyle had the strong accent of his country in great perfection, and used to say that he was "not snob enough like so many 'low caste' Scotsmen and Irishmen, to be ashamed of it."

Far from being so, Pat Doyle rather gloried in it, and strove to cultivate, or rather preserve it.

Doyle's irrepressible flow of spirits had a most favourable effect on those of Lena, and often cause her to smile, an expression which Harrower had not seen in her face, since that eventful morning, when the startled marriage party fled from her father's church to the temporary shelter of the Flagstaff Tower; and the Irish officer could perceive that her soft, dark eyes, though retaining

all their gentleness, had lost much of their brightness by long and heavy weeping, so he strove by conversation to enliven and amuse her.

In doing so, he frequently blundered out the name of Mark Rudkin (who was making himself active in the formation of a troop of Civil Service Volunteers) not through inadvertency ; but simply because he knew of no reason for not mentioning it, or stating how the colonel had marched to Sirdhana, ridden to Begumabad, and blown certain mutineers from the guns at somewhere else.

"And so you were actually afraid of us in the moonlight, Mr. Doyle?" asked Lena, to change the subject of the colonel's exploits.

"Faith was I, and in the temple too ; those Dacoits whose scouts I thought you were, are as ugly customers as you'll meet with on a long day's march, Miss Weston."

"But then we spoke English."

"Not much of that, and what there was of it," added Doyle, with a twinkle in his dark grey eye, "I'll go bail, was too low—too softly spoken—for me to hear."

Lena glanced at Harrower and they smiled together.

"I could only see what I conceived to be two tall fellows in strange dresses," continued Doyle, "and knew not how many more might be in their

rear. Then I am partially lame and have but a small supply of ammunition."

"Poor Rowley Mellon—I should like to learn his fate—risking life as he has done to seek—to save my dear sister Kate!" said Lena in a voice of mournful pathos.

"Ah—poor Rowley! I wonder if we shall ever again hear him sing his jolly song of ours—'The Bengal Fusiliers,' when the sixth cooper of wine has gone round the mess bungalow."

"I hope you shall, Mr. Doyle—I do hope that you shall. But—if—but—"

"Ah, those ifs and buts, Miss Weston; they are our worst obstructions in this life; bad luck to them for words!"

This led to general enquiries after friends, who might have reached Meerut.

Of Dicky Rivers Doyle knew nothing.

"Did the Brigadier escape untouched?"

"Old Graves—yes, and is busy preparing to close up on Delhi, when joined by some of our troops lower down country, for all are not destroyed as the desperate fools of the Moguls flatter themselves."

"Horace Eversly of the 54th—is he all right?"

"Oh bedad, but he is," cried Doyle laughing; "but Horace still parts his hair in the middle, though he has to take his wine without ice, and

eat his dinner without white kids at present, where and when he can get it."

"And Frank Temple, of ours?"

"All right, too, when I left; a brave and resolute boy, that!"

Many others were asked for, whose names brought a shade over the merry eyes of Doyle, when he had to reply, "mortally wounded, and life despaired of," "he'll never be nearer death again, but just once," or "sleeping the sleep of the just; God rest his soul: we buried him at the root of a palm, and had no powder to spare over him;" and so forth. Doyle had to tell of many appalling scenes he had beheld, of harrowing narratives he had heard, and of many heroic and glorious deeds performed by soldiers and civilians alike—the heroism which grief and despair rendered almost a madness.

"The Lord be good to us, Miss Weston," he added in conclusion, "but we live in dreadful and tearing times."

"And now, Doyle, old fellow," said Harrower, "what is to be done? we must hold a council of war."

"A committee of ways and means."

"We cannot remain here and starve."

"Sorrow else I see for it, unless we make a start soon."

"For where and how?"

"We might, perhaps, make our way to the palace of the Rajah of Jheend, who still remains staunch to the Queen."

"After the narrow escape we had from the proposed treachery of old Kunoujee Lall, I can trust no more natives."

"Then we may make out Meerut."

"It is nearer, certainly than the Ganges."

"But the troops must have marched to join the Umballa force, and knowing nothing of their route, we might be cut off by the spalpeens of natives."

"Hemmed in on every side!" exclaimed Harrower, striking his heel on the pavement of the temple. "If we could but reach the Ganges, and get a boat, we might quickly drop down with the stream;—"

"And meet some of our troops on their way up, and, thank Heaven, it is closing up they are," said Doyle, through his clenched teeth; "for the day of vengeance on that merciless Mogul dynasty is not far off I hope!"

Lena glanced anxiously and mournfully at Harrower, for vengeance required hard fighting, and fighting involved peril. Was she doomed to lose him after all, perhaps? Ah, why had she

never missed or valued his great love for her, in the days of their happiness and perfect peace!

"Our troops are closing up," resumed Doyle, and it was cheering indeed for them to hear him speak thus; "by this time Allahabad is no doubt retaken, and from thence, by the river steamers, Miss Weston could easily reach the shelter of Calcutta; you know that, and as for us—"

"We must attach ourselves to the nearest European regiment of course, until we can rejoin our own."

"Is not the Ganges canal nearer by half the distance, than the river?" asked Lena; "and there a boat could be had."

"True, Miss Weston—but how about the lockage?"

"Ah," exclaimed Lena, clasping her hands; "I did not think of that."

"At every lock we should be questioned by the sepoy guards, and discovery would be certain death," said Harrower.

"Then the Ganges be it!" exclaimed Doyle, emphatically; "but how to reach the river, how to travel such a distance on foot, and with Miss Weston, too—"

"Would that I were dead, that you might both be free to leave me!" she said, in a low voice.

"Oh, hush, do not speak thus," said Harrower.

"Then let us make the attempt to go—I can but die by the way."

"Don't talk of dying; it's joking you are, Miss Weston."

"I have little thought of jesting in my head, Mr. Doyle," she replied, wearily, as she drooped her cheek upon her hand, for though she spoke thus courageously of travelling afoot through a hundred miles of a wild and hostile country, the lassitude of exhaustion, and lack of proper sustenance was stealing over her, as the shadows of another night crept on, and the red rays of the Indian sun shed their last farewell in horizontal flakes of light, between the countless stems of the forest trees.

While Lena slept for a third night on her couch of leaves, Harrower related to Doyle the story of their early and later engagement; with certain details concerning their quarrel and separation at Thorpe Audley, in which, however, he chose to omit to mention that his temporary rival had been Colonel Rudkin, for somehow he always shrank nervously from the utterance of his name.

"I congratulate you, Jack, heartily and warmly," said Doyle, pressing his hand; "for she and her sisters were the finest girls on this side of the Calcutta Ditch; but I wish we had

something to drink their healths in. Oh, that we had a stiff horn of brandy-pawnee, well iced—or whisky grog—one of the noblest Institutions of Great Britain, not forgetting old Ireland, God bless her !”

“ I have endured thirst and heat of late enough to drive any man mad !” said Harrower, “ and how poor Lena Weston has endured them also, and survived them, Heaven alone knows.”

“ Poor girl—my heart bleeds to see an English lady reduced to this ebb of misery ; but d’ye mind old Tim Riley, of ours.”

“ The doctor—yes.”

“ Well, heat and thirst have finished him ; he died of sunstroke on the day Mellon and I left Meerut—struck down on parade, as if by the death-blast of Bundelcund !”

“ But he was a heavy drinker.”

“ Troth he was—of everything but water. As Colonel Ripley used to say, he believed old Riley would pawn the regimental colours for a glass of brandy, if he could get nothing else to spout.”

“ Sincerely do I pray that Miss Weston may be safe among our own people before the hot season sets fairly in, and it is close at hand now.”

“ Faith, and so do I, with all my heart. Oh, Jack, how these hot, scorching days, when the air is like the mouth of an open furnace, or the moist

ones, when we feel all limp, as if among drying blankets, make me long for a cool ramble, gun in hand, among the green clover or the yellow stubble-fields at home—say in September—knocking over the brown birds, as the darlings rise in whirring coveys along the slopes of the Mayo hills, and the black eagles are watching you from the peaks of Muilrea. Then home at night as fast as a car and a high stepper can take you—home to a cheery fire-side, to sup on a bird of your own bagging—a tasty partridge, with fried bread-crumbs, and with a bottle of old port, or a jug of steaming punch, to be shared with jolly old Father Molloy, the P.P. of Kilgavower. When people have a comfortable home, I wonder why the devil they ever leave it—and comfortable enough ours was, though there was never a penny of rent to be had for law or love. But it's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and it's profited I have, by this murdering shindy with the Pandies."

"You—Doyle, how?"

"It has caused some confusion, by the burning of banks and books and ledgers, and so has wiped out some ugly scores of mine, contracted up country here; and but for it, Bedad, I might have been now enjoying the luxuries and comforts afforded by Number one Chowringee."

Harrower smiled at his garrulous friend, for the place so familiarly indicated was the debtor's prison at Calcutta.

"Is not the solitude of this vast forest awful?" said he, during a pause.

"Awful! I believe you, my boy, and mighty oppressing to the spirits, too. I can't help listening to the silence," said Doyle, perpetrating an unintentional bull; "but by Jove, there is something breaking that same silence now!"

"Something?"

"Yes, stirring in the wood—hark! voices, they come nearer and nearer."

"Up—up into the gallery, Pat; let us rouse Miss Weston, and conceal ourselves. Poor girl—how soundly she sleeps! are your pistols ready?"

Even while Harrower spoke, the moonlighted vista that was visible from the spacious and pillared entrance of the temple, stretching away into the forest beyond the double row of great stone elephants, seemed to darken as a moving mass drew near—a mass of men on foot and on horseback. Among these the glittering of weapons and of bright ornaments became apparent; then were heard the crashing of branches, reeds, and dead leaves, underfoot; the clatter of arms and accoutrements, and the noise of many

voices talking and laughing, as a band of some forty or fifty natives came straight up the steps of the deserted edifice.

Those on horseback dismounted, and linked their horses together; then all entered the deserted temple together.

"The Dacoits," whispered Doyle in Harrower's ear; "by the Holy Trout of Kilgavower, the very identical Dacoits that gave me chase through the forest."

"Take courage, my own beloved," said Harrower, in the ear of Lena, as he drew her close to him behind the great statue of Seva, and she sighed deeply with her head on his breast; "courage, I implore you—courage!" he whispered, and smiled to cheer her, though she saw it not; but it was such a smile as the Spartan youth might have given, when he had under his mantle, the fox that rent his vitals—smiling to conceal the agony with which terror for her now tortured him.

"Phew!" muttered Doyle, softly cocking his pistols, "there is no shirking the matter; we are in a devil of a mess here—up to the neck in a dirty bog-hole. The child unborn might see his way out of it; but I can't!"

The glare of several torches and Indian fireworks (particularly the flaming trident of Vishnu)

elevated on poles and shedding blue, green, purple, and yellow glares, alternately ruddy or ghastly, or mingling and blending together in rainbow hues, now lighted up a most wild, picturesque and striking scene, bringing out in bold relief, the quaint carvings and details of the ancient Hindoo temple, its wondrously decorated and twisted pillars, wreathed with stony garlands and seven-headed snakes, and more than all, the gigantic figures of the triple gods, each four-armed with high conical caps, thick flabby lips, depressed noses, staring eyes and girdles of lotus leaves.

Below them the light glared on the swarthy and ferocious crowd of men, in turbans or topees, with cummerbunds, vests, and short trousers of every hue, bright red or yellow, green or white, and striped, linen, chintz, and calico; and on some, who wore only a spotted leopard's skin, through the holes in which, their bare brown legs and arms came forth, lean and sinewy—mere bone and muscle.

Their ears, and necks, and wrists, were decorated with rings and bangles, and all were well, but variously armed, with swords, tulwars, pistols, knives, and muskets, and even axes, improvised of cleavers and bill-hooks.

Some appeared to be Mohammedans, others

were Hindoos with the trident of Vishnu painted on their brows, imparting a demoniac grotesquerie to their dark visages and shining black eyes. Among them were sepoy mutineers, Bheels, Khonds and the lowest Kindalas, the outcasts of Menou, for the ranks of the Dacoits were open to recruiting, for all the rascals of India.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE DEN OF THE DACOITS.

ONE Dacoit who had little more on his person than a short, saffron shirt, with a string of berry-beads round his neck, and the trident smeared in ashes and ghee on his brow, but who was armed to the teeth, his girdle being a veritable armoury of weapons, and who seemed to be a Brahmin of degraded condition, now began to harangue the rest.

“What does he say, Doyle?” asked Harrower, in a whisper.

“The devil a bit of me knows—he seems to spake in the unknown tongue.”

“Some religious rites are about to be performed, I think.”

“Some religious wrongs you mane; but only think of all this sculduddery going on in these days of progress and paper collars, of rifled can-

non and photography, when one may send a kiss by telegraph from Cork to Calcutta, and a loving proposal along with it."

"O, hush, for pity's sake, Mr. Doyle," implored the sinking Lena, as she placed her trembling hand on his mouth; "if discovered——"

"There will be as great a row as when Clodius was found by the virtuous matrons at the feast of Cybele, disguised in petticoats. If discovered? Then I shall never more see my old mother at Kilgavower, and I will have seen the last of her tender blessings and bank cheques on the Agra—the same postage paid for both—God bless her!" continued the incorrigible Doyle, whom not even their present imminent peril could repress.

Of the various classes of depredators, who, under the names of Thugs, Choars, Kuzzacks, and Dacoits, infest, or have infested, India, the latter were, after the extinction of the first, by Lord William Bentinck, among the most formidable.

The Kuzzack robbers were invariably well mounted; they beset the highways, and even the great military roads, singly or in couples, to fall on wayfarers, or persons travelling by dawk; or collected together in formidable numbers, to attack armed caravans, or entire villages,

forcing their gates and storming them, sword in hand.

The Choars and Dacoits usually limited their outrages to house-breaking. They were each organised under a leader, and to scheme out their lawless intentions, they usually met in some solitary place, and under cover of night, with well-arranged watchwords and signals ; though by day they followed avocations of every kind, being externally like the Thugs, honest and peaceful members of society.

The usual muster places of the Dacoits, are—or rather were—solitary graves, tombs, or ruins, near the scene of their projected operations ; and from what Doyle could gather, on this night, an attack was contemplated on the fort of a wealthy zemindar of Jheend, situated somewhere near the skirt of the forest.

The sirdar who led them—to wit, the Indian in the leopard skin, and who figured as a lame mendicant on the roads by day—stood erect to-night, a brawny and sturdy ruffian, armed with an infantry sword and horse-pistols, an Afghan shield and matchlock.

He rapidly disposed of his forces for the attack, while some of them poured into the grooves of their tulwars and poniards, a kind of green liquid, doubtless a poison of such potency, that a scratch

would kill anyone; and all this ferocious work was going on in India, at a time when the iron horse and the lightning wire of the Feringhees were just on the eve of introducing the science and civilization of the Western into the Eastern World.

The arrangement of their plans concluded by a religious ceremony—the worship of Durga, patroness of robbers, another form of Kalee goddess of destruction.

A common ghurra, or clay pot of water, with a few blades of the feathery jungle grass therein, was placed in the centre of the kneeling horde, and the degraded Brahmin before mentioned, having by prayer and promises of a portion of the “loot,” propitiated the goddess, the torches were extinguished, the temple involved in darkness, and the whole party quietly issued forth into the forest, leaving behind, however, all their horses, some twelve or fifteen in number, hobbled at the entrance.

Two of the band remained to watch them, but these men seemed stupefied with bhang, as they dozed off to sleep the moment their companions disappeared.*

* The Dacoits perpetrated atrocious cruelties on those who concealed their valuables, “burning them with lighted torches or straw, or wrapping cloth or flax

As the green curtain falls over some brilliant or strange scene on the stage, so fell darkness and silence on the place where this wild and fantastic group had assembled.

"At last I begin to breathe more freely," said Doyle.

"All this fully explains the source of those cries and voices which we have heard from time to time in the forest. The haunt of those fellows is here!"

"And we must lose no time in quitting it, giving them quiet possession, with our best thanks."

"Thanks for what?" asked Harrower.

"The pick and choice of their cavalry; sure a little horse-stealing here will sit easy enough on my conscience, and on yours too, Jack."

"But the watchers?"

"We'll knock the devils on the head, and be off, choosing a good nag each. It's little I'd think of hamstringing all the rest, but for mercy

steeped in oil, round their limbs, and setting it on fire, or inflicting various tortures, to ensure immediate death. The object accomplished, and the booty secured, the gang retired before daylight, and the guilty individuals resumed their daily avocations. In Bengal alone, six hundred and ninety such atrocities disgraced a single year."—*Eclectic Review for July, 1845.*

to the poor brutes ; we'll mar their riding, anyhow, and so prevent pursuit."

"Pleasant, by Jove !"

"What ?"

"Those striking lights and shadows of Indian life," said Harrower, bitterly ; "but they are somewhat strong for my taste."

Handing Lena down from the gallery, they quitted the place pistol in hand, and came forth into the full silvery blaze of the moonlight. All was still in the darkness of the great temple, save the snoring of the two Dacoits, oppressed by sleep and the noxious drugs they had smoked or chewed ; and all was deathly still in the forest, save the occasional splash of the heavy dew drops, as they fell from the bending and overcharged leaves, on the grass below.

With cocked pistol in hand, Doyle bent closely over each of the sleepers, and saw, that save for their heavy respirations, they were still as statues of bronze. This was no time for much mercy or parleying with Pandies, and there was in Doyle's face an expression which shewed, that had one of those sleepers stirred, or even winked an eye, he would—as he afterwards said—"have shot them both, without a grain of compunction, and sent their spirits howling after their brass gods, and the water-pot of Durga."

But matters were not driven to this extremity.

"The faces of these sleeping devils are as yellow as Lent lilies—the Lord forgive me for likening the blessed flowers to these unbelieving heathens—well, as yellow as buttercups on a May morning," said he; "but, by the Rock of Cashel! if one stirs, I'll handle both the niggers in such a fashion, that their own mother wouldn't know them."

"I shall have this nag," said Harrower, selecting from among the horses (which were nearly all of the ugly and ill-shaped breed of Bengal) a strong and active-looking Arab, more than fourteen hands high; "Miss Weston is a light weight, so this animal must carry us both. It must have belonged to some man of rank, for the saddle is Persian, and ornamented with silver."

"Aye, aye—devil a doubt but horse or saddle might tell a queer story, if either had the gift of speech."

Harrower found the stirrup leathers short enough certainly for a man of his stature, but there was no time to alter them; he placed Lena on the saddle before him; the holster flaps formed a pretty comfortable seat, but she had to support herself by clasping Jack's waist, an arrangement to which he had not the slightest

objection. Indeed, we may well fancy that he rather liked it.

Doyle rapidly accommodated himself with a Bengal horse which seemed to suit his fancy; then with the sharp blade of his tulwar he slashed through the bridle reins and girths of the others, letting the saddles fall to the ground.

"Whoop!" he cried as he mounted, forgetting for a moment his lame knee and the sleepers also; "those imps of darkness went through the wood towards the Nuddee, so follow me—this way—towards the east; ere day dawn we shall be nearer the Ganges by many a mile than we are just now?"

"Once afloat we shall be safe, dearest Lena," whispered Harrower, as he sought to encourage her, and put his horse in motion.

"The river runs like a vast mill-race for hundreds of miles, and we may fall in with some of the little iron steamers that ply about Allahabad, for all cannot have been destroyed by the Pandies."

Guided by Doyle, who fortunately knew the country well, they soon left the forest behind, and found themselves traversing the flat and fertile district that stretches around Delhi and Meerut.

Harrower and Lena scarcely spoke, but Doyle's

spirits rose with the exhilarating ride in the moonlight, with a sense of the great peril they had just escaped, and the general excitement of the whole affair; thus he could not resist chatting and laughing from time to time, especially when he thought of the bewilderment of the Dacoits when they returned and found two of their best horses gone, with the state of the harness of the others.

"At a fight, a hanging, or a christening, a wedding, or a burying, we have always something to drink in Ireland; but here have been horse-stealing, a hard ride, a narrow escape, and the devil knows what more, without one drop to moisten our lips, barring the dew, bad luck to it, for discomfort."

Midnight found them riding along the trunk road by Jululabad, near the Ganges Canal, and within less than forty miles of the great river.

"Love is a mighty fine thing in its way," muttered Doyle, as he looked back and saw Lena's head reposing wearily on Harrower's shoulder; "but it would be all the better of a bit of curried chicken, or the smallest taste in life of a broiled bone, with maybe a bottle of sparkling burgundy well iced. Oh, the devil is in it for luck—and it may be long before we enjoy any of them, I fear."

Harrower's horse, though a fine and active

Arab, was quite unused to carry a rider of such bulk as he, and being more than double weighted, shewed rapid signs of sinking strength; but a few miles further on brought them to a grove of trees in which they found concealment, and there they lurked during the heat of the next day. A mango or two, a few dates, and some water from the runnel that fed a wayside well being all their food, till the dusk of evening saw them once more mounted, with refreshed horses, *en route* for the Ganges, which, as Doyle correctly judged, they would reach at a nearer point, above that first proposed by the old soubadar major.

They were now in an open and populous district, intersected by a net-work of fine roads, and thickly interspersed with town and villages, houses, and mosques, factories, and oil-mills. On the way they passed many persons on foot or horseback, in palanquins, or mounted on elephants, which came trumpetting and lumbering along, switching the flies from their dingy flanks by a palm branch in their trunk; and there were trains or caravans of goods, spoil, provisions, and powder pouring into Delhi, where the vast garrison, said now to be fifty thousand strong, together with its great population, consumed all the supplies of the adjacent country.

They were frequently questioned, for in that

quarter the costume of Harrower and Lena were strange; and the circumstance of a man riding with a woman seated on his saddle, was, of course, deemed stranger still; but she passed for a *gholaum*, or slave, a captured Eurasian girl, or so forth; and thanks to Doyle's formidable appearance, or "make up," his rich costume, and, more than all, to his ready wit and intense confidence—"pure Irish impudence"—it pleased himself to say they got on bravely, for to every challenge he replied in good Hindostanee, or in Irish, which, if rather bewildering to no less than four patrols of sepoys, seemed equally satisfactory to the havildars and naicks commanding them.

At all events, he neither spoke the language nor had anything of the aspect of the hated Feringhee Logue, with his great turban, dark visage, coal-black beard and whiskers.

Hence without hindrance, about daybreak, they halted at one of the many ghauts, or landing-places on the bank of the river, where the cross-road that led from Jululabad terminated; and on the other bank, about eight miles distant, the dome of Agapore, a little town, was visible, and thirty miles beyond lies Moradabad, in the land of rice and sugar, but then a stronghold of mutiny and revolt.

The blue waters of the Ganges were sparkling

in the rising sun ; the sandy and winding steeps of the river banks were richly wooded with the peepul, a species of palm ; flowers of every hue were opening their dewy cups, and the myriads of birds were full of song.

High beat the hearts of the fugitives, for here was now the river ; but how were they to procure a boat, and on what pretence ?

Several crafts of different kinds were moored at the ghaut, some with crews of six or eight men on board, others with a single watcher, who dozed listlessly between the thawrts, smoking his hubble-bubble of cocoa nut shell, and solacing himself with hempseed.

There was one boat, a smart little budgerow, having a kind of deck-house with venetian blinds at its stern, which took the fancy of Harrower ; it seemed just to suit their purpose, and to be such as they could manage. They very deliberately fastened their horses to the iron rings placed in a wooden post for that purpose, and conducting Lena, who was closely veiled, on board, Doyle placed in the hands of the two wandering boatmen a handful of rupees, and with a stern air of authority desired them to unmoor for Pooth, a place which he knew to be a few miles lower down the river.

The fellows seemed indisposed to depart with-

out making enquiry ; and they glanced at the horses covered with foam by the river side, and at the veiled woman suspiciously, for the time was one of outrage, insolence, and lawlessness, but the air with which Doyle adjusted the pistols in his Cashmere girdle, and his liberal display of rupees, with their hope of *buxees* (a handsome gratuity) overcame alike their scruples and their curiosity, and in a few minutes more, the budgerow was floating swiftly down the stream, guided by the round paddles or oars of the Indian boatmen.

Within the little cabin built at the stern, Lena reclined on some cushions and a spare sail.

After a time, a sound like a half-stifled cry, made her rise in alarm and peep out ; the budgerow had turned an angle of the wooded shore ; the ghaut had disappeared astern, and Harrower and Doyle were now at the oars, and working with a hearty will.

She looked enquiringly for the boatmen ; but they had both disappeared !

In fact, no sooner had the budgerow reached a safe distance from the ghaut, and turned an angle of the stream, than Harrower and Doyle, by a concerted movement, tossed both the men into the water, thus possessing themselves of the boat, and they were now pulling with a strength and

skill for which they had to thank their island hardihood, and the annual boat races of their universities at home. Such pulling as theirs, was not seen everyday on the Ganges, which seemed to smoke beneath the budgerow, as they tore it through the water.

"Oh!" cried Lena, with clasped hands, "you cannot—surely you cannot have drowned the poor men!"

"No, no, Miss Weston, 'twasn't born to be drowned, these fellows were. See they are scrambling ashore," said Doyle, "and luckily on the northern bank of the river."

"We are getting from bad to worse, Doyle," said Harrower laughing.

"How do you mean?"

"From rank horse-stealing, we have betaken us to open piracy."

"Piracy is it, bedad? They've got the rupees and the two horses, if we borrow their dirty boat."

"But as the nags were no doubt stolen, the boatmen may come to grief."

"The devil may care; think of the dying cries of the women and children slaughtered by the natives in the open streets. 'Remember the women and babies!' was the cry of the Rifles as they marched like pale madmen—pale with rage and

fury—out of Meerut. This is no time, Jack, to pity a Pandy.”

And it was the same heartfelt shout which animated the troops in many a terrible charge ere vengeance was achieved and the mutiny crushed !

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE GANGES.

THE budgerow—a corruption of the English word barge—which the fugitives had appropriated, was a very small specimen of the thousands of native boats that float upon the vast stream which traverses the plains of Bengal.

It was chiefly formed of bamboo, without a keel, for the more shallow parts of the river, but it had a powerful rudder, and in its after part was the species of cabin, formed by upright bamboos roofed with leaves, over which was thrown a coarse cloth.

To Lena this place was assigned; it was cool and pleasant, and had on each side a venetian blind, which she could open or shut at pleasure.

The season was so far advanced, that the Ganges was deeper and broader than usual; but at the speed with which they ran—about five miles an

hour—all their skill in steering and guiding the craft by poles and paddles on each side, were requisite to pilot her clear of shallows where she might lie in the mud, or stumps of trees on which she might founder, or the greater boats coming up with the track rope, which might have run them down.

Sustenance had they none, save some of the rice and millet which were to have formed the simple meal of the boatmen, and thus they had to toil under a burning sun, till the evening drew on, and then as the river was straight and tolerably clear ahead, though thousands of boats were on it, they could trust to the sail and the pleasant north-west wind.

A rough bamboo formed the mast, on which was a sail of sackcloth, lashed to a square yard that ran on iron rings, with a halyard and down haul, and which they could work by sheets aft, according to the wind and the turns of the river.

Watching the summer stars come out of the blue vault above, with all their oriental rapidity after the sun sank beyond the flat and monotonous plains of the Doab, while steering, Doyle, whose spirit rarely flagged, began to sing the "Cruiskeen lan," with "Garryowen," and "Granauaile" in succession, and with all the ready transition and

depth of emotion peculiar to a genuine son of the Green Isle.

In the rude cabin aft, Lena lay upon the couch formed by cushions and a spare sail; she was weary, worn to excess; but Harrower, though his heart bled for her, was compelled to leave her in loneliness, while he assisted in working the boat, the speed of which was somewhat consoling.

"Do not heed me, dear Jack," said she in a tremulous voice, when once he came to her apologetically; "yet I cannot help wondering how, without losing my senses, I got through some of those trying scenes and events in the forest and elsewhere. To-morrow, after I have had some sleep—to-morrow, I shall be better, please Heaven."

But the morrow found her with a quickened pulse and a burning skin; with eyes of unnatural brightness and parched dry lips, for she was in a nervous fever at last! Her temples throbbed, her sight ached with the heat and glare of the sunlit river; the shore looked like a floating mist; the air seemed to be full of fiery and shining particles; but she strove to conceal her sufferings from Harrower, and for a time succeeded in doing so.

Meanwhile by current, oar, and sail, the swift, light boat flew on, passing hundreds of craft—

large passenger budgerows, little dhingees, huge pulwars, or floating shops, in which every species of ware is retailed, and from one of these, Doyle procured some food and sherbet, fruit, and cold sangaree, or negus, comforts which perhaps saved Lena Weston's life.

For a time, Harrower felt that the novelty of the situation was not without its charm.

It was pleasing, certainly, to be on the Ganges, the mighty and sacred river, which the poor Hindoos fondly believe to issue from the root of the bujputra tree, and thus to flow direct from Heaven ; and which for more than fifteen hundred miles rolls down through vast and populous plains, teeming with verdure and fertility ; through forests, inhabited by herds of tigers, leopards, and through swamps, the abode of the gaunt fever king, where the rhinoceros, the buffalo, and the deadly cobra-capello, contest for existence with the wild and hardy wood-cutters.

On sped their boat, past great fortresses of unknown antiquity, gloriously beautiful temples, with flights of white marble steps to the water, where at sunrise the graceful Hindoo girls were seen bathing like naiads or syrens, and at evening setting their many coloured votive lamps afloat upon the stream ; past stupendous tombs of kings and nations that have passed away ; past

mosques, pagodas, and ghauts, over the cloistered quadrangles of which, the mighty banian or the graceful peepul flung their branches ; past groves of cocoa and tamarind trees, and fields of cotton, sugar cane and indigo, till the river, ere-while would widen to an inland sea, with great fleets upon its current, which for ages has swept to the Bay of Bengal those corpses of the Hindoo race that were unburned on the funeral pyre.

At Canouge, about ten miles below where the Ramgunga river joins the Ganges, and where stands the tomb of Mohamed of Ghiznee, the waters widened and deepened, and much larger craft appeared.

The fugitives had now traversed with complete success, more than one hundred and fifty miles of the river ; but the evening of the second day saw both Harrower and Doyle so prostrated by fatigue, as to be incapable of keeping the boat clear of a huge and towering panchway, or passenger boat. Broad and high, it was one of unusual size, shaped like a snuffer tray, and roofed over with palm leaves. It had two masts of tapering bamboo, with cross-jack yards, topped sharply up, and without sails on them, as she was going alowly against the wind and stream, with twelve great sweeps out, and seemed full of men.

“Botheration—we’re clean spilt at last, and

Irish will do nothing for us here!" said Doyle, with sudden alarm, as a line of very dark faces (oddly enough, with Glengarry forage caps, having the Scotch fess check round them) appeared, looking over the gunnel, most of them with Chin-surrah cheroots in their mouths.

As the budgerow came crash upon her bow, a storm of tongues in some strange dialect of the Hindostanee, assailed them, and then a voice in pure English added,—

"Swamp the d——d fools! throw into them a cold shot, or anything that comes to hand."

"No—no, shove them off with a boat-hook," added another English voice.

"They are only a couple of niggers in a budgerow!" expostulated the first.

"But may be very harmless fellows for all that, Tracy," urged the second.

"We are Englishmen, and want assistance," cried Harrower.

"Speak for yourself, Jack," said Doyle, "for I'm an Irishman to the backbone, I'm proud to say; but heave us a rope, you devils ye, before we drift past."

"Pat Doyle of ours, for a thousand rupees!" cried the officer who had first spoken.

"Is that you, Bob Tracy, of the Bengal Fusiliers?"

"Of course it is."

"Mighty kind and considerate it was of you to propose swamping us with a cold shot, you rappareé, whom I brought out to India as perfect a griff as ever passed Mud Point. A nice paragraph you'd be making for the *Hurkara*, to say nothing of a step in the corps. And your thousand rupees, too! Is it on the highway you've been, since I left head-quarters?"

"Who, and what on earth are you fellows?" asked an officer, with an air of authority, and as if in no mood for jesting, and who appeared in undress infantry uniform.

"Two European officers of the Delhi garrison," replied Harrower, and then a loud murmur of interest and satisfaction arose from the crowded boat.

In short, the craft of which they had run foul, proved to be one of several track boats, then coming up the river with a Sirmoor battalion of Ghoorkas, and two companies of the Bengal Fusiliers, forming part of the forces advancing to join those of Meerut, under Brigadier Graves, prior to taking part in the recapture of Delhi.

"Hurrah, Jack Harrower!" cried Doyle, as he made fast the rope; "by the powers of Moll Kelly, but we're saved, after all!"

"Thank God, dearest Lena, that our troubles

are now over," said Harrower, in a low and fervent voice, as he raised her tenderly, kissed her with a heart beating happily, and lifted her on board the great barge, when their appearance excited as much interest among the dark and wiry little Ghoorkas, as among the soldiers of the Bengal Fusiliers, with whom Doyle, by his jollity and bonhomie, had long been a well known officer and especial favourite.

As Englishmen, they crowded round Lena with earnest commiseration and sympathy, for all Europeans were maddened by the sufferings which had preceded the death of the women and children in Delhi and elsewhere ; thus there was something terribly significant of the retribution to come, in the stern joy with which these men welomed her, as she was borne into the cabin, in the arms of Harrower.

CHAPTER XV.

A SEARCH FOR THE LOST.

By this time the King of Delhi, the princes, and the people more especially, had begun to discover that they had made changes which by no means improved their present circumstances or their future prospects. *All* the Feringhees were not slain by a simultaneous rising, as their fakirs, dervishes, and other emissaries had informed them; and already they heard of forces mustering at Meerut, or marching from Umballa, and many other points, intent on avenging the outrages of that terrible month of May.

Shumshoodeen Khan, and other leaders of the cavalry mutineers, urged that Meerut should be attacked; but Pershad Sing, and those of the infantry, replied that all their men would be required to guard the great City of Delhi, if it was invested; and at the councils, held in the

magnificent dewan khana, faces grew pale when they heard how rapidly the troops from Umballa were advancing, hanging, shooting, or blowing from the guns all who fell into their hands ; and of all the deaths to be endured, religious prejudices render the latter mode, the most terrible and repugnant alike to Mohammedan and Hindoo.

And all unused to the use of arms, to drill, and, that which is superior even to drill, discipline, the two princes, Mirza Mogul and Mirza Abubeker, were so completely bewildered by their new official positions, one as Commander-in-Chief of the army, and the other as General of the cavalry, that they excited the contempt and derision of the very men who had perpetrated such deeds of infamy in their names, and had flocked to the standard of their father, the aged but ferocious Mohamed.

Stormy debates and discussions took place in the dewan khana ; the Koran of the Prophet, the Vedas of Brahma, the Puranias, or Eighteen Sacred Histories of the Hindoos, and the entire Shasters, were ransacked for bitter quotations against the Feringhees ; but the bayonet and the tulwar were the arguments most in vogue. Codes, as little known in Britain as the " Sealed Book of the Nine Spiritual Rocks"—the creed of the Free Spirits of Teutonia may be now—were cited

against us ; and even the Khonds, those worshippers of Boora and the devotees of Tari, who offer up their female children as human sacrifices to the goddess of the earth, and who boast that God is nearer to them in their open and sacred groves, than under domes of gold or marble, raised their hands and voices against the Kafir Feringhees !

All was embodied in one sentence :—

“ Our European tyrants are few in number ; kill them all, and let us swear by the Koran, and on the water of the Ganges, to do so ! ”

The calm, indolent, and sensual life led hitherto by the family of the King of Delhi, as pensioners of the East India Company, was completely changed now. Thus in council the two effeminate Shahzadahs were tormented and perplexed by the Muftis, or expounders of Mohammedan law, and their quarrels with the Pundits, or chief exponents of the law of Brahma, with their vakeels, or secretaries, on one hand ; and on the other by their newly-made generals, rissaldars, soubadars, and so forth, many of whom they could not understand without an interpreter, for their palace was thronged by Bheels, Rajpoots, Mah-rattas, and all the tribes of Bengal, so their royal highnesses began to find that they had

rather a sorry time of it, and were not likely to forget the year 1273 of their Hejira.

Meanwhile the city, beyond the palace walls, continued to be a scene of incessant outrage and plunder; the guards at the gates "looted" all who passed out or in; the streets were strewn with arms, accoutrements, and ammunition, the plunder of the great arsenal. The kotwal, or mayor, was changed every other day, and many of the sepoys were so laden with silver and gold coin, robbed from the citizens, that they could scarcely carry the load. Poor regiments became jealous of the rich. English books and furniture littered all the streets, and the bones of their owners lay unburied outside the city, and for twenty miles along the roads leading thereto were others, whitening in the sun, the relics of victims slain by the Goojurs, or Hindoo gipsies, who prowled about after nightfall, searching for fugitives; and now, to increase the general confusion, every petty rajah and zemindar took arms, for plunder or revenge.

When the princes appeared among their tumultuary forces, their orders and arrangements excited laughter, according to the narrative of a native of Delhi; they were seen to tremble at the firing of cannon or musketry, and were compelled now to be often under arms in the glare of the noon-

day sun. The sweetmeats sent by the King for the sepoy in camp were invariably plundered by those at the gates. The sepoy neglected their regimental bugle, and were seldom mustered by their new officers, and "the nobles and begums, together with the princes, began to regret the loss of their joyful days."

As old Mohassan Jamsetjee stated before the Court Martial, which afterwards tried the King of Delhi—

"I could never relate all the horrors I have seen in the city during two short moons, were I to live to the age of Lokman the Wise!"

"And how long did he live?" asked Jack Harrower, the junior member of the court.

"Three thousand years, sahibs," was the confident reply.

Such was the state of affairs in the city of the Moguls, when Rowley Mellon, disguised as a wealthy zemindar of the kingdom, his face dyed with tobacco juice, and his fair whiskers and mustachios shaved completely off, reined up his horse, and paused to survey the scene (from the eastern end of the bridge of boats by which the Jumna is crossed), on the evening subsequent to his separation from Doyle, and after a close pursuit and narrow escape.

He was handsomely attired and well armed;

his heart was desperate and resolute; he was perfect master of the Hindostanee in all its strange phrases and idioms, and he had everything to inspire him, but the hope of success, and yet his gnawing anxiety urged him on in quest of a knowledge that might break his spirit for ever.

He had escaped the sowars, and the frantic fakir who led them, as they had all gone in pursuit of Doyle towards the forest; so he had shaped his course in search of information first to the house of Khoda Bux.

On his way thither, he learned from some syces, who were cutting grass for the cavalry horses, that a white woman had that morning been brought forth from Delhi, half dead, tied to the corpse of a kindala, by the coolies of the market-place, and then flung into the Jumna, near the Nawab Bastion.

Who might that white victim have been?

Mellon felt his heart bursting with grief and wrath, and he restrained with difficulty an impulse to pistol his informants, who were quite unconscious of offence.

On reaching the farm-house of the Hindoo ryot he found much grief and confusion prevailing there. The venerable Khoda was no more. A heavy and sudden sickness had fallen upon

him, and his six sons had dutifully borne him—even as he in other years had borne his own sire—to the bank of the Jumna, on a pallet, where at low water he had been left to die, to be washed away by the river when it rose, to become a meal for the first alligator that came out of the mud, or appetised tiger, whose nose detected something eatable from amid his lair in the jungle grass.

The household were plunged in grief and were all secluded for the time ; but, by a lucky chance, Mellon, after long waiting and anxious pondering, saw the ayah Safiyah coming from the tank, with a jar of water balanced on her head, with that grace peculiar to the Indian women, and he at once made himself known to her.

She wept, and kissed his hands many times when he dismounted ; and his feelings may be imagined when she informed him that Kate—his wedded bride, his soft and gentle, bright-haired Kate—was a captive in her father's house—the slave, the gholaum of a man named Pershad Sing, an ex-havildar of the 54th Infantry.

He was told of her having been secreted by his old landlord, the kind Parsee ; of the strange plan formed to get her out of Delhi ; of her being discovered, and that she, Safiyah, “had only learned but a day or two before, at the shop of

the merchant in Silver Street, that Missee Kate was still in the house of Weston Sahib."

She also related that a hundred gold mohurs were offered for her, dead or alive, by the Delhi princes, and that proclamations to that effect were posted in the Kotwally and on the eleven gates of Delhi.

Why did Pershad Sing seclude her from those royal personages who offered this reward?

Why? Mellon felt his blood run cold.

"Oh, Safiyah," said he; "a woman may do much—more than a man—where mother wit and strategy are requisite; you will aid me to set her free—aid me, and name any reward that it is in my power to give—or in the power of my friends."

"Reward, I seek none," replied the Indian woman, "none but in the love I bear the poor mem-sahibs and little Missee Polly Baba,* and all the family. I shall serve you, sahib, and make the attempt, even though this Pershad Sing should discover and kill me—yet he would scarcely dare to do *that*," she added, pointing to the grove of the Three Temples, where her three younger sisters, all pretty girls, were the "spiritual wives" of the priests who officiated, so her family had some influence in the district.

* Dear, a term of affection.

Mellon's spirit rose on finding that he had fallen so quickly on direct traces of the lost one, and still more when he heard that Lena, and big, curly-pated Jack Harrower, had both escaped the terrors of the massacre, and were, or had been recently, in the forest of Soonput Jheend.

The ayah accompanied him at once to the city, and evening found them by the bridge of the Jumna, when Mellon's emotion compelled him to pause before enacting the first serious part of his task, confronting and passing the guard of the abhorred sepoys at the Calcutta Gate, to which the new causeway leads direct from the bridge of boats.

The city with all its walls and towers, lay steeped in the brilliant splendour of the setting sun; undimmed by smoke or haze, every feature of the lovely panorama could be seen in all its details, distinctly as if through a powerful glass.

We have said there is little or no twilight in India; evening was now at hand with starry night treading swiftly on the heels of Hesperus. The whole of the western quarter of the sky away beyond Hansi, was one flood of amber light, streaked with broad bars of purple, brightening into orange and shining gold as the sun sank down

behind the round domes of the great mosque of Shah Jehan and its slender minarets of marble, throwing far across the plain the shadows of the massive walls where many a bayonet gleamed as the sentinels trod to and fro, while high over all uprose the vast façade of the palace of the Moguls, with its eight great octagon towers, crowned by open and beautiful cupolas of red and white marble.

With Safiyah following him at a respectful distance, Mellon slowly and deliberately walked his horse along the pontoon bridge, close under the walls of the magnificent palace and the Selinghur fort, and then wheeled to the left, through the Calcutta Gate, where many a time and oft he had been subaltern of the guard.

The sentinels of the Hurrianah Light Infantry (a corps which had killed all its officers and recently come in) looked at him with a careless glance, but without attempting any molestation, for they were busy with one of those native newspapers which were printed in Hindostanee or in Oordoo, and one copy of which, prior to the mutiny, is said to have sufficed for a whole battalion of sepoys, so strong was the vituperation against the British in their columns.

He threw a handful of annas to a begging Fakir, laid his whip across the face and shoulders

of a coolie, who was offering some impertinence to Safiyah, and with all the air of a haughty Mohammedan zemindar, rode straight along the front of the palace, towards Chandney Choke.

Again he was in Delhi, every street and feature of which were associated with the faces and the voices of those dear friends he had lost; the scene of rides, of rambles, and shopping excursions with his beloved Kate.

How memory went back to every minutiae of the past, rendering griefs and regrets but a series of agonies; to that marriage morning ere the crash came—Kate in her white bridal dress, with Jack's champac ornaments, and her long lace veil; the bridesmaids, Lena, Polly, Flora Leslie, and the rest; the white crape bonnets, the smiling and blooming English faces, the happy circle; then the horrors and the chaos by the Cashmere Gate and Flagstaff Tower, and the subsequent events of which no man has yet dared to write—events, of which "*the worst is left unsaid.*"

Was he the same Rowley Mellon still; (often had poor Kate asked of herself a similar question) and was this city of the accursed still the Delhi of those days?

One fact appeared to him evident, that the

alleged force of the mutineers had been greatly over-estimated by the terror of fugitives and by the inborn oriental love of falsehood and exaggeration.

CHAPTER XVI.

AGAIN IN THE STREET OF SILVER.

THE seeming zemindar dismounted at the house of the Parsee in Chandney Choke, accompanied by the ayah, and entered the shop, almost jostling the formidable Baboo Bulli Sing, who swaggered out most splendidly armed and attired, after making various purchases, of such value as to indicate that his funds were more than usually flourishing.

Mellon at once made himself known and stated his errand and purpose.

Mohassan was filled with great alarm for his visitor's safety, but with much greater concern for himself. The sepoy was prone enough to plunder the people on pretence of concealing the Feringhees, on no pretence whatever according to their humour, and all who could speak English were forbidden to do so, while those who could

write the language, had their right hand stricken off, by order of the King of Delhi.

Tidings that the troops from Umballa were coming on, certainly added to the natural desire of the Parsee to befriend Mellon, whom he advised of the impossibility of getting into the house of Pershad Sing, guarded as it was by sepoy, and filled constantly by disorderly natives, such as the budmashes or irregular soldiers of the city.

"Disorderly natives," muttered Mellon, through his clenched teeth; "and—and *she* is there!"

"I have gold to offer," he added after a long pause.

"Those sepoy are so laden with spoil, that could you offer them the wealth with which the devil sought to tempt our Holy Prophet Zerdusht * it would scarcely avail, and might naturally excite cupidity and suspicion."

"Oh, my old friend—what then, would you advise?"

"To-morrow night the colonel gives a feast of lanterns at which many persons will be present."

"Of what kind?"

"Such as the naicks and havildars, whom he has made captains and lieutenants; bands of

* Zoroaster.

Nautch dancing girls, mad fakirs, swaggering budmashes with shields and tulwars, and amid the confusion they will create, something might be attempted to get the poor lady away, and—and—”

“What?” asked Mellon, impatiently and sadly.

But Mohassan paused, for he was too much afraid of the tyrannical Brahmin sepoy, and Rajpoot sowars, to add what the natural impulse of his heart suggested, “and bring her *here*.”

“Till to-morrow, then—though much may happen in that space of time,” said Mellon; “I have endured much since I lost her,” he continued in a broken voice, “and a few hours more of this gnawing anxiety may not add much to the sum total of the misery I have endured in common with too many others. Safiyah, I shall go to the house to-morrow with a coloured lantern and mingle with these rascally mummers.”

But the quicker-witted Indian woman, who had been thinking while Mellon and the Parsee were speaking, had formed a plan of her own.

The most successful escapes achieved during the mutiny, had in some instances been made by those who had the skill or good fortune to disguise themselves properly as natives; and it was

evident that it could only be in some such disguise, that she could leave her father's house—or rather, as it was now, the house of her captor.

So various are the races of India, that by darkening the complexion, disguising the figure and speaking a little Hindoostanee, it was not difficult among the people of one race, to pass oneself off, as belonging to another.

Safiyah knew this, and entreated Mellon to leave the entire matter in her hands. She had no doubt of her ability to get into the house among the Nautch girls and others; then she knew every apartment and passage, and every door and window were rendered familiar to her, by a five years' residence as a domestic in Doctor Weston's family; and if she could once procure an interview, however brief, with "Missee Baba Kate," she had little doubt of being able to free her, if she was well and possessed of sufficient strength to assist in her own escape.

The chief difficulty of the smart and active ayah lay in the selection of a disguise for her lady, as she meant to convey one concealed about her own person; the Parsee had dresses of all kinds in stock, so she only doubted the choice.

There is a great difference in the material of the dresses worn by the Hindoo women of India,

which vary according to *caste*, but very little in style.

In the majority of cases, one piece of cloth forms an entire dress. A thin sort of muslin, variously dyed, twenty or thirty yards long is disposed by the Hindoo girl round her lithe and slender waist, where she cunningly fastens it without button or pin; then she gathers the end in folds over her shoulders, and so are these arranged as to make a covering for her head and bosom if necessary; but as the back, arms, and feet are left bare, this disguise would never have suited the pure and unstained skin of Kate Mellon.

Neither would the *ravakei*, or scanty bodice, having sleeves only to the elbow, which, with the muslin web just described, forms the dress of the Christian women in that sultry clime, for such an attire at that crisis would neither have availed for the purpose of safety or escape.

Safiyah selected the dress of the Mohammedan women (who always follow the Arabian or Persian fashions), a sleeved tunic, with trowsers to the ankle, and a thick veil. These she concealed under the ample folds of her own muslin dress, and carrying a lantern, on the night in question prepared to join the disorderly mummers who

crowded the house and gardens of Colonel Pershad Sing, of the 54th Native Infantry.

"Once outside the city we shall be safe," said Mellon, hopefully, to the courageous ayah, "as patrols of cavalry were to come this way nightly from Meerut, to further any scheme Mr. Doyle and I might form, and to clear the place of those brawling budmashes and villainous Goojurs who have been committing such terrible crimes of late."

"But Mellon sahib," said Safiyah, "why should we enter the city?—why pass the gates?"

"How can we do otherwise?"

"Can you have forgotten that there is the river? Take one of the many boats that lie moored on the Jumna, and be at the gate of the garden. I shall bring my mistress forth that way; and if I fail, or other plans are necessary, I will come there alone and tell you."

This plan seemed so simple, so full of encouraging hope, that Mellon only, lest she might misunderstand him, repressed a vehement desire in his great gratitude to embrace the dark ayah, who, being resolute and prepared for any emergency, placed in her girdle a sharp *kundeer*, a deadly kind of dagger, with a hilt shaped like the letter H, having a cross grasp in which the clenched hand is inserted, and with which a

thrust can be given with the whole front force of the extended arm.

They separated, and while she took her way to the villa, he, well armed with a brace of revolvers under his vest, and a sharp tulwar slung by his side, quitted the city after sunset, unchallenged by the Wellesley Bastion, which was open and incomplete (being in course of erection when the revolt took place), and then he found himself on the bank of the Jumna.

The sun had given place to night, but his amber splendour yet lingered in the west, and against it rose in outline, dark as indigo, the giant mass, and clustered round towers of the Selin-ghur Fort, the great domed cupolas of the palace, and the long slender line of the bridge of boats, under which flowed the broad river, partly tinted with blue, purple, and gold by the changing sky above.

All was still save the howling of an occasional jackal, the shrill voice of the chowkeydar, or watchman on the palace walls, the clang of a metal ghurrie as a sentinel struck the hour at his post, or the chafing of the river in its downward flow among the strong reeds, or the light shallow boats that were moored by its margin.

He soon selected one from among them, many, having been the pleasure boats of the late

European residents, were totally without owners now. By a stone he smashed the padlock of the mooring chain, and shipping an oar, sculled away to the place with which he was so familiar—the garden gate of the good Doctor's mansion. The white plastered façade of the latter, its terraced roofs, with the great herons still seated thereon, he could see clearly in the cold starlight, and it seemed as if but yesterday since he had been talking with Kate by the river terrace there—talking of their future married hopes and plans, while watching Polly and Dicky Rivers playing at *goolale*, and shooting pellets at the wild birds by the water side.

There was no moon yet, which he considered an omen of good success.

Floating in the middle of that river, (into which, as into the sacred Ganges, the Hindoo women had flung their shuttles as a mystic sign of the coming strife,) with his eyes fixed alternately on the eastern façade of the mansion, as it rose above the garden wall, and on the gate, which every moment, with tremulous expectancy, he hoped to see open and two female figures, or one, at least, issue forth, Mellon waited there oblivious alike of the chill dew and the chances of observation from the walls of the city, of which he was within half musket range; and at that

time sentinels expended their ammunition on the slightest caprice or suspicion. He knew, also, that all the guards were mounted with loaded arms, as he had spent nearly the whole day in rambling about the city and making mental notes for the use of the brigadier at Meerut.

Hour after hour of anxiety drew slowly and wearily on, ever with the fear that each, as it passed, might render Safiyah and himself too late, perhaps, to save her; and even if saved, what a narrative might he not have to hear from Kate—his once pure, happy, and adorable Kate!

Meanwhile he could see how the entertainment of Pershad—he of the grotesquely long mustache—was progressing in the mansion of the Westons, which had once been the very focus of the fashionable European society in Delhi. House and gardens were alike gay with innumerable lanterns of coloured paper, carried on bamboo canes, while the walls glowed ever and anon in the explosion of fireworks, which cast alternate glares of deep crimson, brilliant green and gorgeous purple, bathing in successive floods of light the whole façade, causing the lofty windows to gleam in giant prisms, and imparting to the great herons which sat winking and blinking on the balustrades so many hues on breast and

pinion, that they seemed for the instant like birds of brilliant plumage.

Occasionally the voices of the Nautch girls pleasantly attuned the sound of their tambourines, their wiry vinas and the tinkling of their golden anklet bells came floating from amid the shrubberies of oleanders and acacias on the soft night wind across the silence of the star-lighted river.

Suddenly there came another sound that made Mellon's heart leap painfully with intense expectation.

It was caused by the bolt of the garden gate being shot sharply back, and with a vigorous hand he impelled the boat close in shore as the familiar barrier in the wall opened, and two females rushed forth each with a parti-coloured paper lantern, which they instantly extinguished.

"Kate—Kate!" he exclaimed, in a voice which emotion rendered hoarse and quite unlike his own.

"Oh, Mellon—Mellon!" was the soft but piercing response, for her voice was full of intense pathos, and sobbing with joy, she was clasped in his arms.

Thus was Kate saved when her peril at the hands of Pershad Sing, the Rissaldar, and the Fakir were greatest, rescued by one of those

interpositions of fate, or happy coincidences, which seem to come providentially and direct from Heaven.

Never even in the first flush of their love and tenderness, did Mellon gather his restored Kate in his strong and sheltering arms with such rapture as on the occasion of this reunion—this restoration, as it were, from death; and tender indeed was the tearful and impassioned kiss, for which both had yearned, but never hoped to exchange again.

Weeping with joy in the bottom of the boat, the faithful and affectionate ayah lay at Kate's feet, clasping them to her bosom, and Mellon, while he sculled the skiff round the long and narrow isle, which lies below the pontoon bridge, and across the river, was too much occupied by the great fact of Kate's presence and safety to hear even the story of her deliverance, which was briefly this.

The sepoy sentinel at the front gate, had narrowly examined Safiyah Bux, and perceiving that she was undoubtedly a native, had permitted her to pass saying,—

“Enter, stranger, in the name of Brahma, and peace be with you.”

Thus permitted and encouraged, she mingled with the guests, the Nautch girls, the sowars,

fakirs, and others, and imitating their bearing, had rambled unnoticed all over the mansion and gardens, lantern in hand; but no where among the many persons she saw, the Hindoo cousins, nieces, and gholaums of Pershad Sing, all of whom made themselves quite at home in the dining-room, boudoir, and drawing-rooms, could she see her young mistress, so her heart began to sink with apprehension, lest the tidings told by Pershad to the Parsee were true—that she had been sent out of Delhi, Heaven alone knew whither—or worse perhaps, had been destroyed.

At last, when all the disorderly rout were assembled in the verandah or on the terrace to witness the fireworks, she bethought herself of the bedrooms, in which she had so often sung little Willie and Polly to sleep, and dressed the beautiful blonde hair of Missee Kate.

Swiftly she made her way straight for the chamber of the latter, and found her just on the eve of springing from her window in wild terror of *who* her visitor might be. Then the ayah told in broken accents, how a word or two had reassured the poor trembler; how rapidly the Mohammedan dress and veil were assumed, and how they had both reached the garden gate unperceived and undisturbed by a private walk known to them both; and as she concluded a narrative,

which, with all its interest, Mellon scarcely understood, so much was he absorbed with Kate, she flung into the river, as a votive offering, the key of the bedroom, the door of which she had locked; and thus it was found secured on the outside to the great consternation of Pershad Sing and the surprise of Shumshooden Khan and the fakir, when, about two hours after, they burst it open, and, as already related, found Kate *gone!*

Landing near the pontoon bridge, they set out afoot on the Meerut road; but had barely gone three miles, when the tramp of horses was heard, and as Mellon had conjectured, a patrol of the Queen's Dragoon Guards, consisting of twenty men under an officer, came slowly and leisurely up; and just as the three wayfarers were about to take shelter in a thicket, lest the horsemen *might* prove to be sowars, the sound of English voices made Mellon start forward and discover himself.

The dragoons gave a hearty English cheer on learning that one European woman, an English lady, more than all, the missing Mrs. Mellon was under the sure protection of their Sheffield steel, and nearly the whole party expressed an earnest desire to shake hands with her, while Kate wept freely again, as she heard the familiar tone of

their voices, and saw the bright honest English faces of the Carbineers—for to be even a European, was to be a brother now.

Mellon had told Kate of Lena and Jack Harrower having escaped the carnage at the Cashmere Gate and Metcalfe House; but, that of the fate of Polly and others, he was still unhappily ignorant.

At the hamlet of Shaderuh, which was close by them, the officer of the patrol, without the ceremony of asking leave, took possession of an ekah, or light pony gig, on two wheels, with a canvas hood, for Kate and the ayah; the proprietor, after the cold barrel of a pistol had been put to that part of his person whereon the trident of Vishnu was smeared—to wit, his forehead—felt himself constrained to act the part of driver; and in this rather rough conveyance, which had too probably been stolen from some European fugitive, she reached in safety the now half ruined town of Meerut, where Mellon had to report the loss of his friend, and the state and aspect of the city, to the brigadier in command.

From what he had been able to gather, through personal observation, and the information given by the Parsee, there would seem to have been in Delhi, twenty-six regiments of revolted Bengal

Infantry ; portions of eight regiments of cavalry, chiefly Mohammedans, two thousand six hundred miscellaneous deserters and a vast force of Gholandazees or artillerymen.

CHAPTER XVII.

BY THE HILLS OF ALMORA.

THAT light-hearted individual, Pat Morris Doyle, after the alleged manner of his country—the land of larks and laughter, bulls and blunders—had made a mistake in concluding that the troops under Brigadier Graves had left Meerut to meet the forces from Umballa or anywhere else. They had remained there, leaving no means untried to strengthen the station against any attack from the insurgents in Delhi.

Only two days of rest, of peace, and quiet fell to the lot of Mellon and Kate, after their arrival at Meerut ; yet, these two days almost sufficed to render the past, to her, a horrible dream, which, when told, she strove to forget ; the terrors endured by the Cashmere gate ; the wandering in the streets of Delhi, alone, treading on, or stumbling over the dead ; the dreary night in the

mosque of Shah Jehan; the seclusion in the house of Mohassan Jamsetjee—even in Mellon's old room; the strange and weird means of her proposed escape on a bier; her capture by Pershad Sing and all she had endured while in his power, were to be forgotten now, as she laid her head on Mellon's breast, and felt his protecting arm around her.

But they had only met to be separated again!

Acting as the advanced guard of the troops coming on from Umballa, Brigadier Sir Archdale Wilson, who had assumed the command of the small force in Meerut, marched it out of that place on the evening of the 30th of May, and attacked a great body of the mutineers, who were posted within fifteen miles of Delhi.

Mellon joined the slender force of Europeans composed of various corps and Civilian Volunteers, who were added to his little band of Bengal Fusiliers, and the remnant of Harrower's company under Frank Temple.

He bade a hurried adieu to Kate, left her with many other ladies in tears, terror, and apprehension of the worst that could happen, and led on his men, who, with two companies of the 60th Rifles, four pieces of cannon, and a squadron of the Queen's Carbineers, were ordered to maintain to their last bullet, the suspension bridge which

crosses the river Hindoon, and then for the first time since that evening by the Cashmere Gate, did he and others find themselves face to face, and ere long foot to foot, with their cruel and treacherous enemies.

Carefully trained and disciplined by the brave British officers they had assassinated in cold blood, armed with the perfection of Enfield muskets, and well skilled in their use, the sepoy were certainly formidable antagonists ; they fought like dark demons, giving no quarter and asking none ; and there in the sultry night, where the cannon boomed, and the lurid shells were bursting along the gorge of the Hindoon, in a combat lighted by the clear moon,—by the yellow glare of a burning village, and once most fatally by the explosion of an ammunition wagon, the work of death and of *Retribution* went sternly on !

The sepoy were led by their newly elected officers, by Baboo Bulli Sing, Nour-ad-deen Abraha al Ashram, and other Talookdars of the kingdom.

The blood of our men was roused to fever heat ; a most un-British yearning for vengeance—but a just vengeance—fired every heart. Friends, relations, wives, mothers, and sisters—yea, and innocent little children, had perished all

over India in a hundred terrible hecatombs, and in the hearts of our men there swelled up the divine assurance that God would give them power to punish and to be victorious over those who had destroyed so cruelly, so many helpless Christian people.

Redly flashed the dreadful fire of musketry out of the wooded gorge and gloomy hollow, through which the Hindoon flows towards the Jumna, and its echoes mingled with the beating of drums, tom-toms, the roar of gongs, blowing of buffalo horns, and yells of "Deen! deen!" showing that many budmashes of the city were then among the more regular sepoy infantry.

"Remember the women! Remember the poor babies!" was the *cri-de-guerre* of the 60th Rifles, as they brought their bayonets to the charge, and hundreds of the enemy were shot down and bayoneted as they swept through them at Ghazee-udeen Nugger, and drove the survivors in rout and terror back to Delhi, pursued by Colonels Custance and Rudkin, with the 6th Carbineers.

So furious was the advance of Wilson's slender force, that he defeated the enemy with the loss of only one officer and forty rank and file.

His troops halted at Alleepore, a village one day's march distant from Delhi, and three days

after, Rowley Mellon, who had escaped without a scar, was sent back to Meerut, with a train of doolies, or hospital litters, bearing the wounded, the sick, and the sun-stricken ; the latter were numerous, and he was compelled to leave many by the wayside, to gasp out their last there, with opened veins and leech-covered temples.

Kate, who had seen him depart, and saw him return, only to depart for battle again, began to experience something of what the wife of a soldier in time of war, and more especially in front of the enemy, has to undergo ; but ere Mellon rejoined, a happy circumstance occurred.

Some days had elapsed, and on the very morning that Mellon, two hours before daybreak, was parading in the half destroyed, white cantonments, (which cover four miles of plain,) a few convalescents, with whom he was to march to the front, the unexpected sound of drums was heard, waking the echoes of the compounds, and the quarter-guards hurriedly got under arms.

Great then was his satisfaction on discovering that the new arrival was a battalion of Ghoorkhas (the hardy mountaineers of Nepaul, clad in scarlet uniform, with Scottish forage caps), and two companies of his own gallant regiment, which had disembarked from the Ganges ; but his satisfaction expanded into astonishment and joy, when

by the light of three flambeaux, carried by native torch bearers, he saw Harrower and Doyle, both in uniform, by the side of a litter, in which a lady was reclining.

For miles along the road had Lena been borne in a palanquin, by relays of four natives at a time, two in front and two behind, with the *bangey*, or bamboo pole, resting on their bare shoulders; and these had chaunted unwearingly while they trotted on, a doggrel rhyme in her praise.

“She’s light as a feather—Butherum!
But step ye together—Butherum!
A lady pretty and white—Butherum!
To carry her is a delight—Butherum!
But gently carry her—Butherum!
For the sahib-logue is to marry her,
Oho—Butherum!”*

This absurd chaunt made Lena laugh more than once, and the unwonted sound of her merriment was heard and recognised by Kate and Mellon.

Long—long did the reunited sisters weep in each other’s arms; and it happened that the arrival of this new reinforcement enabled Mellon to delay for a few happy hours, his departure for the army, from whence an officer, Horace Eversly,

* Be wary.

who was now serving with the staff corps, came back with orders from Brigadier Wilson to the effect, that as the projected attack on Delhi would too probably be a protracted operation, the whole of the women and children were to be sent to Ninee Tal, a place of safety among the hills near Almora, in the land of the faithful Ghoorkhas, more than one hundred and twenty miles in a straight line northward from Meerut.

"And now, Jack, for retribution!" said Mellon.

"Yes, Rowley," replied Harrower, with the stern joy of a brave and a grave man, "and the day we retake Delhi, shall be in more senses than one, a red-letter one in the annals of the Indian army!"

"Where's your bungalow, Mellon?" said Doyle; "it is dying I am for a cheroot and a glass of bitter beer. By the holy St. Bridget! but we met that boat load of Ghoorkhas just in time, Rowley, for Jack and I were pretty well used up; a little more, and I believe we should have forgotten even the way to go to sleep."

Stirring and startling events crowded fast on each other now.

It seemed so hard—so very hard, to part again—Kate from her husband, and Lena from her lover, after all they had undergone; but the girls

knew that they would be safer in the rear, and that those they loved would thus endure less anxiety in the coming strife. Thus, before the sisters could very fairly realise the fact that they were free from immediate peril, and before they had told each other even the half of their griefs and terrible experiences while separated, the sound of the Ghoorkhas' drums and fifes, with those of the Fusiliers, had died away on the road to Wilson's camp, and they—Lena and Kate—were proceeding, under an escort of poor, feeble soldiers, all more or less wounded and sickly, with a vast caravan of women and children, many of them widows and orphans, in covered bullock carts, palanquins, buggies (a foolish name for a mere cab), doolies, on horseback, or perched in the howdahs of elephants, towards the mountains of Almora.

Kate had in her care the orphan child whom sturdy Phil Ryder of the 32nd had borne away from amid the carnage by the Cashmere Gate, where too probably the parents had perished. He only knew that his name was "little pet," or "mamma's boy;" so many a mother in that sorrowful caravan was kind to him, and though none could be to him like his own, the tender-hearted Safiyah did her best to fill her place.

Lena and Kate had every comfort now that

could be afforded them, plenty of attendance, and the use of a carhanchie, or native carriage, drawn by bullocks, and covered by an awning, and at Almora they hoped to be almost as secure as if among the "Ditchers," as the people up country name those of Calcutta; yet each sister could remark in the other the hollow cheek, the haggard and hunted expression of eye, which showed what each had undergone since that eventful marriage morning.

After several days of severe travelling, they reached their place of refuge, Ninee Tal, that haven of rest so often mentioned with the most tender solicitude by many a poor soldier and civilian, whose wife and little ones spent there in safety the days and hours, the weeks and months, during which he was broiling and toiling in the trenches before Delhi, at the capture of Cawnpore, or in the long and weary defence of Lucknow.

There Lena and Kate, with other fugitives, remained for months, hearing only at intervals the varying stories of the innumerable conflicts that were being waged over all the vast empire of Bengal, and in that time only twice did letters reach them from those whom they loved, and who were then serving with the combined army,

that sought to humble the pride and punish the crimes of Mohammed of Delhi.

On the banks of a beautiful lake, under the shadow of snow-clad mountains, twenty-six thousand feet in height, and not far from the borders of Nepaul, guarded by convalescent soldiers, and by the European gentlemen of the station, enrolled as volunteers, under a Captain named Ramsay, the fugitives of that portion of the army, pallid and worn women, and tender little children, were safe even from Dacoits, Goojurs, Thugs, and other pests of India, especially while a regiment of Ghoorkhas held all the roads that led thereto ; for these hardy warriors are of Mongol origin, and though worshippers of Brahma, after a free and easy fashion of their own, have no sympathies whatever with the effeminate Hindoos of the plains, being jolly little fellows, who eat everything that can be cooked, and never drink water when arrack or brandy can be had.

So there the sisters lingered, with torn hearts, while the distant strife went on, and none could yet foresee how it was to end.

The wet season came ; the snows melted on the peaks of Ramee ; the bright green rice in August was just visible above the soil of the plains ; the topes of mangoes and palms waved

their dark foliage on the mountain breezes ; the gorgeous flowers, the birds and butterflies, were brilliant in hue as ever ; but it seemed to the poor refugees, as they dwelt there amid the wilds of Nepaul, that they were almost forgotten by that external world, in which they had lately played a part so stirring ; and yet the last thoughts of many a brave fellow, as he gave up his soul to God from the field of battle, were with those who pined by the beautiful Lake of Ninee Tal.

The sisters were in mourning now, having long since taught themselves to number "papa and Polly with the dead ;" but their time was not passed in idleness, for, with hundreds of other ladies and women of all ranks, they worked in common, making flannels, shirts, lint, and bandages for our soldiers at the siege of Delhi.

After they had been two months at Ninee Tal, a letter reached Lena from Harrower. It briefly stated that he and Mellon were well ; that Doyle had been wounded, and that they had obtained sure tidings of Polly and Doctor Weston. She was in the royal zenana of Delhi, and he confined either in the palace or the Selinghur Fort ; but that the General commanding was confident of achieving the freedom of both.

"There are no tidings yet of little Willie or Dicky Rivers—so I fear that we must anticipate

the worst," continued the letter. "Since we have been parted, I have seen many a sight, such as I hope shall never again meet my eyes ; but the deaths by which our people have perished, and are perishing, are accompanied by such indescribable horrors, that our hearts are hardened—maddened, dearest Lena, and 'kill—kill—kill all !' are the words in every man's mouth ; and queer figures we cut as we go at the fellows in our shirt-sleeves, with pith helmets, long brown Cawnpore boots, and pantaloons of any kind save those ordered by the Horse Guards."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ARMY OF RETRIBUTION.

IN the first week of June, the united army of retribution—for so it may justly be styled—under General Sir Henry Barnard, K.C.B., an officer who had led a brigade in the Crimea, and to the capture of Sebastopol, appeared before Delhi; but these united forces from Meerut and Umballa, though divided into three brigades, under Halifax, Jones, and Wilson, were few in number, and thus were quite unfitted to invest or attack a city so vast, so strong, and so well defended by a great body of well-drilled and appointed native troops, flushed as they were by slaughter, plunder, and excess, inflamed by religious fanaticism, and knowing too that all of them, from Mohamed, the King, down to the lowest caste Hindoo, fought with a felon's halter round his neck.

Barnard pitched his camp on the parade ground of the old cantonments, which are described in our opening chapters, between the race-course and a ridge of rocks that overhang the city. On his left was the Flagstaff Tower; on his right was the mansion of a Mahratta chief (known as Hindoo Rao), having a handsome portico of eight pillars; in his centre was an old mosque.

Mellon and Doyle were with their regiment, in the first brigade; while Harrower, with his few Light Infantry men, was attached to the 60th Rifles, in the brigade of Wilson, and consequently had his post near the pukka-built house of Hindoo Rao.

During all these events and adventures which have been related, Jack's regiment, under Brigadier Inglis, was engaged in and about Lucknow, assisting bravely in his heroic defence of that place, which is more than two hundred and eighty miles lower down the provinces than Delhi.

Harrower's escape and arrival in camp made some noise at the time, for he had been a popular guest at all the mess bungalows, and was well known for his dashing bravery in some of the more recent Indian battles, particularly at Moultan and Goojerat. Many came to welcome and congratulate him; among others, Rudkin,

with his cold, stately manner, and perpetual smile; and Jack felt that he could freely forgive and shake the hand of the Colonel *now*.

The army was almost without cannon, till it captured a few from the enemy in a battle fought at Bardulla Serai, a village within four miles of the city, where the Bengal Fusileers and the Queen's 75th regiment charged over the open ground which was swept by the cannonade, and rushing on at a rapid double, shot down or bayoneted the gholandazees, and seized their guns for service against the city.

Doyle, with a few of the Fusileers, pursued the fugitives close to the Cabul Gate, and was rewarded for his ardour by a bullet in the calf of his left leg. "Among the articles captured here," says Nolan, "was a covered cart, supposed to contain ammunition, but which when examined, was found to be filled with the mangled limbs and trunks of Christians slaughtered during the insurrection within the city and cantonments."

Too probably this was the waggon with the remains of the 54th officers, left by Colonel Rudkin near the Flagstaff Tower, a month before.

For weeks and months the toil of besieging Delhi went on, with burning heat, sunstrokes, cholera, jungle-fever, wounds and slaughter; and there amid the white plain stood the proud de-

fiant city, under the scorching sun of the Indian summer—Delhi of Homaion and the Moguls—its white marble domes and minarets glowing and apparently vibrating by day, or gleaming coldly under the pallid lustre of the moon and stars, by night, till day would dawn again, and once more tower and mosque would seem to quiver in the wavy lines of heat; for the atmosphere was like that of an open furnace, and the air grew thick with mosquitos and clouds of white, whirling dust. But by night and by day, the boom—boom—boom of the great cannon from all its bastions, and from the batteries raised against them, went ceaselessly on, while garlands of fire—the red, flashing fire of the sharp Enfield rifles, wreathed the lofty walls, or spouted out from among the beautiful gardens, the rich foliage, the tombs, detached villas, the ruins of ancient times, and all along the ridge of rocks on which the old cantonments stood, and from whence the river, under its bridge of boats, could be seen winding away for miles, through the plains of Rohilcund.

Every day saw some deed of heroic valour performed either by the enemy or the army of Retribution, which was slowly but steadily pressing closer and closer to the beleaguered city. “While rebellion, treachery, and murder, were stalking through the fairest provinces of Hindostan,” says

the editor of the Delhi Gazette; "while regiment after regiment was falling away from its allegiance—while brave men were being tortured or shot down by their own companions in arms—while comely matrons and delicate maidens were being subjected to mutilation and the vilest indignities—while little children were being torn asunder or hewed to pieces—while humanity was everywhere being outraged, and government set at naught—the little army before Delhi held its ground, and like a murderer's conscience, grimly assured the mutineers of a certain and terrible *retribution!*"

"To-morrow is the first of August," said Eversly, who had ridden from the Staff headquarters, to the post of the 60th Rifles, near Hindoo Rao's house; "and as the general confidently expects those fellows in the city to make some great demonstration, the whole army shall remain under arms all night, and so be prepared for anything."

"And why particularly to-morrow?" asked Frank Temple, handing the Aide-de-Camp a bottle of Bass's pale ale, which was as dear in camp as sparkling Moselle had been a few weeks before.

"It is the festival of the Eed, whatever the deuce that may be, and these Mohammedan des-

perados are certain to attempt something in the shape of row," replied Eversly, as he threw aside his solar topee, and stretched himself on the grass which formed the carpet of Harrower's tent or hut, for his residence partook of the nature of both, being constructed of large branches, palm leaves, and the cover of a bullock-waggon.

"Queer bunk, this, Horace; isn't it?" said Jack, who was seated on an empty ammunition-keg, and smoking in his shirt-sleeves.

"Rather!" drawled Eversly; "think of civilized men living in huts of mud, leaves, and bamboo cane!"

"A power sight better do that, than to die in them," said the contented Pat Doyle, who was nursing his wounded leg; "confess that it is, Horace, you Anglo-Saxon Sybarite?"

"A Sybarite—by Jove!" ejaculated the once fashionable Eversly, who was now attired in a very singular costume indeed, a loose white cotton blouse, a pair of wide, baggy, red cotton breeches, long, buff, Cawnpore boots that came above the knee, with a shawl thrown over his shoulder, and a blue veil round his cork solar-topee. His beard had grown to a most patriarchal length, and his hands, whilom so daintily covered with the finest of kid gloves, were now burned by the sun and exposure, to a more than

Eurasian tint. "Did a Sybarite ever dress thus, Doyle?"

"It is so long since I dipped into Strabo or Pliny at Old Trinity, that I can't say," replied Doyle; "but it's mighty ill off I am now, for all the wardrobe I have in this blessed world, is a patrol jacket made out of the cover of a billiard table—by the same token, it belonged to your 54th mess—a shirt, or rather the collar of it; the better part of a pair of breeches made out of a chintz coverlet, a sword and a revolver, and these are all, barrin' a bullet wound in the leg—bad luck to it! But it's some pretty pickings I'll have once we are inside that same Delhi, or my name is not Pat Morris Doyle!" he added, viciously striking right and left on the grass with an empty beer bottle to kill the mosquitos that were buzzing about him.

"One thing is certain," said Temple, as he handed his cigar-case round, "if we do not take Delhi before our reinforcements arrive from Bombay or Madras—to say nothing of Europe—we shall be destroyed piecemeal by sunstroke, fever, or the bullet, for these Pandies fight like devils, and we have already more than three thousand men on the sick list."

"But reinforcements are coming up country

fast," said Eversly ; " we expect the 78th Highlanders daily."

" Highlanders—whoop !" cried Doyle, " I wonder how their crural extremities will fare among these clouds of mosquitos that bother us so."

" If we repulse a sortie of those fellows to-morrow night," said Harrower, " we might follow them pell mell into the heart of the place and so make pretty play with the bayonet."

" Wilson half anticipates some such movement ; but we are only strong enough as you see, to invest Delhi on one side, while the other remains open to recruiting and supplies. Once in, we shall not forget the General's order."

" No, Horace," said Harrower grimly ; " I have committed to heart, that portion of it, where he says, ' Major General Wilson need hardly remind the troops that *no quarter* should be given to the mutineers ; at the same time, for the sake of humanity and the honour of our country, he calls upon them to spare all women and children who may come in their way.' But I would to Heaven that all this butcherly work were over," added Jack, whose heart was far away at Ninee Tal ; " so thick are the graves of Europeans and natives round us now that the camp is horrible, and the moment the sun sets, then we have the exasperating howls of the jackals."

"Here's a dead Hindo-o-o-o-o! Where—where — where? Here — here — here!" cried Doyle, imitating the jackal, and making them laugh, for when intoned, its howl sounds oddly enough, very like those words.

"You must have hard work of it, just now, you fellows of the staff corps," observed Harrower.

"Hard work—by Jove, I should think so, Jack," replied Eversly; "we sleep nightly booted and belted."

"But so do we all."

"Well," rejoined Eversly, "I think, as Shakespeare says somewhere, that 'as I cannot last for ever, it were better to be eaten to death with rust, than scoured to death by perpetual motion;' and truly I am weary of this perpetual work—all danger, and neither gain nor glory."

"You should remember, Horace, that we—the Army of Retribution—must value neither."

"Well, old fellow, another glass of pale ale, and then I must be off to the next brigade," said the aide-de-camp, "for to-morrow night may find us involved in a sharp shindy, and providing other bones than those of the Hindoos for the jackals to prey on."

Eversly had referred to Delhi being open on

one side; thus it was that on the 2nd of July, the besiegers had the mortification, to see five entire regiments and a battery of artillery,—the cruel mutineers of Bareilly, Moradabad, and Shahjehanpore, cross the Jumna and march into the city, with all their colours flying and bands playing.

By the time of the Eed, the roads leading to Delhi—particularly that one from Kurnaul—were littered with the dead carcasses of horses, camels, and bullocks, with black clouds of flies, and flocks of croaking vultures hovering over them, their skins, after bleaching in the rains of June, being dried to mere parchment under the fierce sun of July. Ruins of houses, mosques and old tombs, all riddled by round shot, or starred by musket balls, told that each had been, and might be again, the scene of a deadly skirmish, and among them lay the whitened skeletons of many a man and horse, while over all the ground were shreds and fragments of red and blue cloth, belts and accoutrements, with the white paper of expended cartridges whirling in clouds upon the breeze.

The groves of lofty peepul trees, of mangoes and beautiful date palms around the city, were all lopped bare, stripped or torn to pieces by the showers of round shot, grape and musketry that

were exchanged in the attack and defence of the walls and bastions.

As in the "Curse of Kehama,"

"The rice roots by the scorching sun were dried ;
And in lean groups, assembled at the side
Of the empty tank, the cattle dropt and died ;
And famine, at her bidding, wasted wide
The wretched land ; till, in the public way,
Promiscuous where the dead and dying lay,
Dogs fed on human bones in the open light of day."

On the 5th of July, the brave Sir Henry Barnard died ; Reed, his successor, resigned in ill health, and then the entire command devolved on Sir Archdale Wilson.

Eversly's costume, as we have described it, was a fair average specimen of that worn by the army before Delhi. Individual taste, exigency, and the study of comfort, had all full play now. Regimentals in general, and pipe-clay in particular, had almost disappeared. Save by his weapons, a Lancer could scarcely be known from a Hussar or Fusilier, and nearly all the Infantry, Ghoorkhas, and Rifles included, wore frocks and trousers of blue-slate coloured linen, and caps covered with white puggerees of the same material, as a protection from the sun ; but helmets of pith or wicker-work, with numerous escape holes, and long

buff Cawnpore boots, were in the greatest request among the officers.

As reinforcements came in, the camp assumed a gayer and more varied aspect; there were the scarlet uniforms of the newly arrived Europeans, the flowing white attire of the Sikhs, and the gaudy, parti-coloured dresses of the Rampore Cavalry, the Patan Horse from Nepaul, and other natives, who, through fear, interest, or the love of lucre—or perhaps, while only waiting the tide of events for fresh treachery and bloodshed, followed the army of Brigadier Wilson.

As yet, he was without a proper siege train.

If, for a time, the din of cannonading ceased, the silence of the camp, especially at night, would be broken only by the monotonous tramping and chaunts of the doolie-bearers, as they bore the wounded to the rear, with the red curtains down, amid the howling of herds of jackals, in tope and jungle, anticipating a feast, as their sharp noses scented the blood that dripped through the seams on the ground.

When the camp was short of provisions, it was Harrower's good fortune to secure a herd of sacred bulls and cows—an entire herd consecrated to Brahma, as their capital condition, sleek curry-combed sides, and horns all painted and gilded, made apparent.

From the park of a wealthy Rajah close by, he brought them all into camp, where they were shot down, cut up, and served out to the troops, who had thus an excellent repast on the night of the anticipated sortie — the festival of the Eed.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NIGHT OF THE BEE.

THE mutineers in Delhi now consisted of those from Oude, the Doab, Bundelcund, Sealkote, Bareilly, and Rohilcund, whence they were sent by the Ranee of Jhansi, an Indian princess, who in person ordered the slaughter of forty Christian mothers and their children; from Paniput, Kurnaul, and rascals from many other places, mustering in all twenty thousand horse and foot, while the British were barely a third of that number.

“Aha!” said the old King of Delhi to Zeenat Mahal, his favourite sultana, when the Bareilly regiments marched in, with their bands playing, absurdly enough, “The Laird of Cockpen,” “The British Grenadiers,” and other airs, which their officers had taught them, “those English Kaffirs could make roads of iron, and iron fire-horses,

but they have lost India by a single cartridge—the fools! the sons of burnt fathers!”

The festival of the Eed (like that of the Mohurram, at a later period) was awaited with anxiety, as it is a solemn one among the Mohammedans, who hold it as the anniversary of the sacrifice which Abraham intended to make of Ishmael and *not* of Isaac, the former being at that time, as the Imams and Moulvies maintain, his only son, whom in a vision repeated on three successive nights, he was ordained to offer up as a human offering to God.

It was the night of the 1st of August, the close of a hot and steamy day in the wet season, when the desperadoes in Delhi sought to commemorate this festival by an attempt to turn General Wilson's flank, and get into our rear.

“Turn out, Harrower—there go the bugles!” cried Temple, putting his head inside Jack's wigwam; “those fellows are in motion now.”

“Are the 60th falling in?”

“Yes, and our handful too, for we are all to go to the front. If the siege train was only up, what a night this would be for an escalade!”

“All right, Frank; I'll be with you in a minute, old fellow,” replied Harrower.

He closed and carefully sealed and addressed a letter he had been writing, lest he might not be

spared to return, for a brave man is always prepared for the worst. It was that missive for Lena at Ninee Tal to which he afterwards added the paragraph that closes a recent chapter. He then took his sword and pistols and hastened to put himself at the head of his little party, which consisted now of little more than Sergeant Philip Ryder and twenty rank and file.

From their cowardice, or incapacity, or for both defects of character, old Mohamed, of Delhi, was compelled to relieve his sons and grandson of all military service, and to confide the command to the leader of the Bareilly mutineers, who began to act with unusual vigour.

He had attempted to get a train of guns across the Jumna by means of a temporary bridge for the purpose of cannonading Wilson's rear; but in this he was baffled by the force of the stream, which swept the frail edifice away, and on the evening of the 2nd, he commenced an attack along the whole line of our batteries with round shot, grape, shrapnel shells, and musketry.

In the dark the incessant flashing of the exploding bombs and the red flare of the cannon from bastion and embrasure, with the volleying of the rifles along the far extent of city wall, and from the ridge of rocks that formed the British position, had a wonderful effect. Then to the

din of all these were added the strange, wild yells of the Mohammedans and Hindoos, blending, at times, with the united cheer of the besiegers ; and so the strife was waged amid pitchy darkness, but so much at random, that when day dawned, only twenty-two of Wilson's force had been killed and wounded, while more than two hundred of the foe lay dead before his breast-works.

So passed the night of the Eed.

Intrrenched behind a bank of earth near Hindoo Rao's house, and amid a frightful atmosphere, produced by dead bodies hastily interred, Harrower's men had kept up a steady fire for nearly the whole night, repelling several attacks on their position, and when day was breaking, their pouches were well nigh empty, and all their percussion caps expended. Their fire then slackened and gradually ceased, on which a lingering party of the enemy, composed of about a hundred sepoys of various regiments, led apparently by a Dervish and Budmash of the city, once more made a dash at their position.

The latter personage who bore a tulwar and round shield of buffalo hide studded with gilded bosses, and who was clad in a scarlet silk koor-tagh over a light muslin shirt, with a yellow chintz sheet floating from his shoulders, a green

turban, and Cashmere cummerbund full of weapons, made himself particularly active.

"Victory to Mohamed Bahadoor Shah!" he was crying; "shout—shout, oh, ye army of the Faithful, for Allah will yet destroy these curs of Kaffirs!"

"Now, lads, come on with the bayonet," cried Harrower, leaping sword in hand out of the trench, where he and his men had been under arms all night. Fixing their bayonets as they scrambled after him, his little party of the 32nd formed in rank entire, made a rush upon the followers of the Budmash, who had been rash enough to linger after all the rest had fallen back under cover of the city guns; "remember the women and children," added Jack; "though they are five to one, come on, for vengeance and the Victoria cross!"

The sepoy, who were destitute of real moral courage when opposed hand to hand to armed Europeans, fired a confused volley which knocked over two of Harrower's men with wounds more or less severe, but the rest dashed on with bayonets charged, and slew many without mercy.

The Dervish, who disdained to seek safety in flight, believing infallibly in his *kismet*, or destiny, was roughly knocked down by Phil Ryder's clubbed rifle, and lay still as if dead; but the

Budmash, who had been the first to fly, stumbled and fell on his face, rolling over several times in frantic attempts to get on his feet and to escape the bayonets that were being thrust at him.

"Shoot the scoundrel!" cried Ryder; "is there one cartridge left among you?"

"Bayonet him—bayonet him!"

"Club your firelock, Bob, and polish the Pandy off!" cried others; thrice their bayonets were deeply lodged, not in his body, but in the turf, as the Indian, in his terror and activity, bounded and tumbled wildly about.

"Stay, lads," said Harrower, "I think I should know this fellow. Lie still, or get up and speak," he added, in Hindostanee, giving the seeming Budmash a most unpleasantly vigorous kick; "are you not Assim Alee, who was the chief valet of Doctor Weston?"

"Ye—yes, sahib," replied the other, gasping and pea-green with terror as he was dragged up, shaken on his feet, and disarmed by the soldiers.

Harrower's brow grew very black indeed, and there was a dangerous gleam in his eyes as he glanced round for a convenient gallows.

"What have you to urge, fellow, that I should not hang you from the branch of that mango-tree?"

"Much have I to say that you might like to

hear, sahib," replied the other, folding his palms together, and veiling the snake-like spite and hate that twinkled in his eyes, under the usual cringing demeanour of the Bengalee domestic.

"That I should like to hear, fellow—how?"

"I can tell [you where the Padre Weston and Missy Baba Polly are now—now at this moment."

"You can?" asked Harrower, starting.

Assim Alee salaamed and pressed his hands more closely together.

"Then where?" demanded Harrower, drawing the revolver from his belt, a motion which the ex-kitmutgar regarded with nervousness.

"Promise me life," he whined.

"I promise nothing. Tie his hands, Ryder, and take him to the rear; yet why should I trifle or delay?" added Harrower, pausing and looking at the mango-tree. "Speak at once—where are they? Speak, or I shall instantly have you put to death!"

"In the Delhi Palace."

"Safe?"

"Quite safe, sahib."

"What proof have I of this?"

"Ask the Dervish lying yonder, if he be not dead, and he will tell you the same thing, for Hafiz Falladeen never lies."

The Dervish, who was only stunned, and who

had lost his beloved snake in the recent fray, was speedily shaken up and securely tied to the kit-mutgar, after which they were dragged away to the house of Hindoo Rao, where Harrower had them brought before the general for an examination which took place in the drawing-room.

The once gorgeous furniture had all been destroyed, but the frescoes on the walls remained untouched; among these were paintings of a Bengal tiger rending a white man in a red coat (a favourite and significant design of Tippu Sahib), Vishnu with a seven-headed and manifold snake curling about him, and with the lotus leaf, in the flower of which lurks the spirit of Brahma, the creator-god, and all around were peacocks and monkeys, with grotesque episodes out of the sacred Puranias.

The treacherous valet, whom we have hitherto omitted to describe, was a tall, wiry, and muscular man, with long jaws, thin cruel lips, a nose high and aquiline, eyes black as sloes, and large and deeply set. His brows were beetling and shaggy; his beard was long, and fell on his shoulders now in sable masses, from under a green turban, which he had adopted in virtue of his alleged descent from the Prophet of Mecca; but the whole expression of his face combined intense craft with greed and cruelty.

On being examined in his native language, he assured Mellon, Harrower, and the General, with a group of officers, who listened eagerly (for over all that had happened in Delhi there hung, as yet, a veil of horror and mystery), that the Doctor and his youngest daughter were taken into the Delhi Palace on the day the mutineers arrived from Meerut; that he had been guiding them to the Flagstaff Tower, when Baboo Bulli Sing came out with five hundred armed men, and carried them off; that he had received in defence of his master three desperate wounds, which he was ready to show (as he had really received them when brawling in a drinking khan), and he added many more free sketches of his own faith and deep grief for the loss of his beloved master, who was now confined in the tower near the Sally-port, while Missy Polly was in the royal zenana of Mirza Abubeker.

Dark glances were exchanged among the group of officers on hearing all this, and many remarks were muttered far from complimentary to the scion of the house of Tamerlane.

"Take this whining fellow to the quarter-guard, and there keep him securely till further orders," said the General; "bring in the dervish."

Hafiz Falladeen, though a religious mendicant,

and a great reader of the Koran, as his first name imports, had not been improved by the excesses and orgies of the past months. His filthy orange-coloured shirt still partially covered his lean and meagre person ; his grizzled hair was matted and greased as usual, but his cheeks were woefully hollow and haggard ; his hands trembled in the iron fetters that were linked over them ; his bloodshot eyes had the wild and restless glare of those of a hunted hyæna, and he strove to hide under a calm exterior the hate and loathing of his captors—a sentiment, in its intensity, bordering on insanity.

However, he confirmed beyond a doubt that the poor clergyman and his younger daughter were still alive, and in the palace ; in short, that he had seen both only yesterday—the former through the bars of the prison in which he was lying, feeble and ill, on a poor charpoy, or native bed ; and the other when walking in the garden of the zenana, leaning on the arm of a gholaum, or female slave.

“ What matter is it about a girl—a woman ? ” asked the dervish, with bitter scorn ; “ does not the Prophet tell us, in the blessed Koran—so surely as the poor shall enter Paradise, five hundred years before the rich (comfort for thee, and me, Assim Alee), that when he looked down into

hell he saw that the greater part of the wretches there were women—and so, as it was revealed at Mecca, shall it be !”

“Take him also to the quarter-guard, Sergeant Ryder, and let him be securely watched,” said the General ; “if you have deceived us in all this, dervish, I shall blow you, and a score of other black wretches, from the guns to-morrow !”

“Taunt us not with our colour,” replied the dervish, in his guttural accent ; “know you not, O Kafir Aga, that when God made man, he sent the angels Gabriel, Michael, and Israfil, to fetch him seven handfuls of earth from seven different depths, and each of seven different colours ? These he kneaded into the body of Adam, our common father — and hence the varied complexions of men.”

“Yes, but where was the memory of our common father when in the mosques and bazaars you urged the slaughter of our helpless women and innocent children ?” asked Harrower, sternly.

“Soubadar, whose dog are you, that you seek to question me ? I did so because it was revealed at Mecca that they were the children and wives of idolaters, whose time had come,” replied the dervish, firm in his terrible faith. “ ‘Unto every nation,’ saith the Prophet, in the chapter *Al araf*, ‘there is prefixed a term of existence, which no

one can anticipate or protract even for an instant,' and so it hath come about that the term of your rule among us hath passed away."

"The devil it has!—well, we shall see," said the General, impatiently; "away with this old humbug to the quarter-guard! and now, gentlemen, I shall have the pleasure of consulting with you about the information we have so luckily received."

"May I venture to suggest, General, that a flag of truce might be sent to the nearest gate of the city to require the surrender of those two survivors of the late massacre?" said Harrower; "and may I add, that if you will permit me—"

"Nay, my dear fellow," said Rowley Mellon, pressing forward; "as the son-in-law of Doctor Weston, I think this duty should be mine."

Harrower coloured with vexation; but ere the General could speak—

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Rudkin, with his calm smile, "if so dangerous a duty as bearing a flag of truce must be performed, I claim that honour."

"Why?" asked Mellon, with knitted brows.

"As your senior officer," was the somewhat lofty reply.

"A duty of peril it will be," said the General, "as I don't believe those fellows will respect even

a green flag, then how much less so a white one !”

“That matters little to me,” replied Colonel Rudkin ; “I shall be its bearer.”

“You, Colonel !” exclaimed Harrower, with a keen and suspicious, almost stern expression of eye, which Rudkin and Mellon alone understood.

“Yes, Captain Harrower,” replied the Colonel, with his imperturbable smile ; “I am quite unaware of any reason why I should *not* be of service to Doctor Weston and his family.”

“Having been,” Jack was beginning, in a passionate and blundering way—

“Like yourself, an old and valued friend,” added Rudkin gently, assuming his white pith helmet.

Harrower was vanquished ; but he started, as if a wasp had stung him. He could not for the life of him know whether or not Rudkin was indulging in a covert sneer ; but he could only gnaw his nether lip under his thick mustache, while the General said—

“Mellon, you are a good Hindostanee scholar ; assume the pen, please, and write a missive, addressed to the King of Delhi, demanding the instant release of the two prisoners, if he would save forty of his principal people, now in our

hands, from being blown from the cannon's mouth to-morrow. Write to dictation, and I shall give you the tenor of the document."

"At which gate shall I deliver it, General?" asked Colonel Rudkin, buckling on his sword.

"The nearest—there is no time to be lost."

"Good—then the Cabul Gate be it."

In less than half an hour after this, just as the heat of day was past, and a hasty tiffin had been discussed, Harrower and Mellon, with some pardonable envy, saw Colonel Mark Rudkin, accompanied by a trumpeter of the 6th Dragoon Guards, bearing a white handkerchief tied to the point of a hogspear, depart on his errand of mercy, and ride deliberately over the open ground, and among the scattered gardens that lie between Hindoo Rao's house and the city, a distance of exactly one mile.

All cannonading had ceased; the atmosphere was close and still, and the city with its white walls, seemed as usual vibrating, to all appearance, in the hot scorching sunshine, while the bearers of the flag of truce were permitted quietly to ride straight up to the Cabul Gate, the ramparts and round towers, on each side of which, were lined by dark foes looking curiously on. Some were laughing, and while hiding their loaded muskets below the parapet, cried mockingly—

“Chulo sahibs—chulo sahibs, ha ! ha !” (i.e. “come on gentlemen—gentlemen, come on.”)

When within half pistol range of the gate, the trumpeter sounded a parley, while the Colonel raised himself in his stirrups, and displaying the large official missive, said in a loud voice—

“A letter for his majesty, the Padishah—for Mohamed Bahadoor of Delhi, in the name of her majesty the Queen of Britain.”

The Colonel spoke the purest Hindostanee and was distinctly heard ; so, after a few minutes, the great Cabul Gate opened slowly, and several sepoy appeared in uniform, with their bayonets glittering in the sun, and led by two native officers wearing their gilt fringe epaulettes, and double collars of gold beads round their necks.

These beckoned the Colonel forward. Their uniforms were faced with bright yellow, for they belonged to the *Soolteen-ka-Pullan*, or 3rd Bengal Infantry, a regiment which had been exactly a hundred years in existence. Rudkin had served with them at Goojerat, so he rode confidently forward ; and he was just in the act of handing the letter to the nearest officer, when a sepoy stepped behind him, levelled his rifle and shot him through the head !

The unfortunate Rudkin fell dead and his terrified horse galloped away towards Kishena Gange.

Tossing aside the violated flag of truce, the carbinier trumpeter escaped a volley by the speed of his charger ; but as he looked back, he saw the body of Rudkin pierced uselessly and rancorously by many a bayonet, as it was dragged into the city, after which the Cabul Gate was shut.

A bitter imprecation escaped the usually quiet Jack Harrower, on witnessing this atrocious crime through his field-glass.

"Poor Rudkin!" he exclaimed, "oh! Rowley, we have both had a narrow escape."

The letter was forwarded to the palace, but no answer was ever returned ; and from thenceforward no more flags of truce went near the walls of Delhi.

This event raised the temper of the army to fever heat, and with earnest joy it welcomed the arrival of the siege train, consisting of forty heavy guns and mortars, which, with a vast supply of ammunition, came into camp on the morning of the 4th of August, escorted by a wing of her Majesty's 8th Foot, two companies of the 61st and the 1st Battalion of Belooches, bold and resolute Highlanders from the rugged Alps of Kohistan.

On the 7th, the Punjab Infantry came in, and by the 13th, as Jack wrote in one of his letters to Lena, "the breaching batteries were all in working order, and it did one's heart good to hear the

big guns with lurid flashes in the hot and humid air, pounding away day and night against the Cashmere Gate and Water Bastion. In twelve hours more we expect the breaches to be practicable, as the walls are falling in enormous masses, and then, Lena—then for the escalade, and a terrible requital of the past!”

CHAPTER XX.

A MARTYR.

POLLY who, on reflection, had bitterly repented of acquainting Abubeker with the information she had received from the serpent charmer, was soon after told by him that "her sister and the white sahib had fled across a tributary of the Jumna, and could not be overtaken; moreover, it was confidently believed by the fakir and the Havildar that the latter had been drowned."

This was all that Polly could learn of the fate of those so dear to her; and the prince did not add, that the non-commissioned officer, had been, by order of Mogul, hung by the neck in the Kotwally, for returning without Lena.

Hoping to rouse Polly from the painful apathy and listlessness which oppressed her, he had her removed from her solitary apartment and placed among the other girls in the zenana, where her

arrival and appearance excited much surprise and comment among the copper coloured Odalisques, who were chiefly the daughters of zemindars of Delhi and Talookdars of Oude.

They were glittering with ornaments, rings, and precious stones, especially on their slender throats and wrists, with massive bangles on their ankles, while Polly Weston was without other adornment than the masses of her golden hair, threats and persuasion having alike failed in prevailing on her to wear the splendid gifts, emeralds like bunches of grapes on stems of gold, and so forth, which the servants of Abubeker heaped on trays before her.

With the light-hearted Hindoo girls—for many of them were daughters of Brahma—she felt more security (but this was fancy only) than in the *cuchuc-oda*, or chamber in which the newly arrived inmates of the zenana are first placed. Among those poor girls who were at first disposed to mock and envy her, Polly's innocence, her artlessness, and exceeding gentleness, soon won every heart; and they even caressed and strove to soothe her by assurances of coming glory and the happiness of future years, pressing her to remember how different might have been her fate.

Had not the Nana Sahib at Cawnpore, that very week, slain the Christian women by hundreds

and flung them into a well, because not one of them would enter his zenana?

It was only when they called her "Nour Mahal," that she became irritated, for the name seemed a mere mockery of her state.

"Nour Mahal!" she would repeat with loathing; "oh, it sounds like a fragment of an Arabian Tale or a Christmas pantomime, blended with a chaos of misery."

Was she the same Polly Weston—the once happy and heedless girl whom every one admired, petted and liked, and who had flirted with all the little ensigns and cadets in Delhi? or was this sudden transition from the civilization of an English home, to oriental splendour and barbarism, a madness that had come upon her?

The Odalisques overwhelmed her with questions about the Feringhee women; asking if it could be true that they rode horses, drove ekhas, walked arm-in-arm with men, talked to men, and oh, Mohamed! danced with men, which even the Nautch girls do not do? If each Feringhee man was the husband of only one wife, acting thereby like a very shabby fellow? They were astonished that she did not wear a ring through one nostril (like themselves) with a string of pearls thereto; and all, even the fair Cashmerees, laughed openly at her for "being so *white*."

One asked her if England was a large city, and how many gates it had; if the Begum of the land made all the greased cartridges herself? how many heads she cut off in a day? and so forth; while sometimes Abubeker, who was perfectly well educated and knew better, sat by on a carpet smoking his hookah in which the rose-water bubbled, and laughing heartily at Polly's annoyance or perplexity and the wonder of his fair recluses.

Passive in their hands, so far, Polly permitted them to anoint her beautiful golden hair in the Indian fashion with *Chymbele*, a distillation of jasmine much affected by native women; but she resisted their attempts—as her eyebrows were brown—to blacken her lashes with kohol, or to redden the ends of her fingers with henna till they would resemble coral, as they wished them to do.

She tossed angrily aside the rich dresses in which they sought to decorate her, that she might still further please the eye of Abubeker. They brought her slippers embroidered with pearls and gold, without heels and with curled up toes; but she threw them aside also in disgust, remembering the tiny kid boots, high in heel and fitting smoothly to the white stocking, the slender ankle and the arched instep that poor Dicky

Rivers adored, as he had told her a hundred times.

Polly felt most at peace when night came, and she was left to her prayers and her own reflections. Her father yet lived, for so had Abubeker told her till he was weary, but adding ominously:—

“How long he may have life, depends upon yourself—your love alone can prolong it.”

Little Polly frequently wondered whether her kind mamma who was in Heaven, saw her sufferings and knew the fate of her three daughters and of their father—that good mamma who lay in peace in the churchyard of dear Thorpe Audley. How often had she, and Kate, and Lena, lingered near that venerated grave and decorated it with flowers, feeling a melancholy yet soothing joy in the conviction that by so doing, they might be pleasing an immortal spirit, and that they were closely linked to one who was beside God: and when their father prayed, they had marvelled if his voice from the old oak pulpit of the village church, was heard by good mamma in Heaven—that same old church in which they had so often knelt by her side and in childhood had trembled so bashfully when repeating their catechism on Easter Sunday.

Her past existence and her present were so

different, as to give her almost the Hindoo idea of a duality of life, and of that power of metempsychosis which forms a portion of the creed of Brahma.

Listlessness, illness and languor still hung over her, so Abubeker had her sometimes conveyed to a beautiful gilded kiosk in the gardens of the palace, where were yet remaining the ponds and marble tanks wherein the Empress of Shah Jehan fed her tame fish and had fillets of gold put round them. Those plantations of Delhi, though beautiful as the "Garden of Delights," which Zobeide bet against the "Palace of Pictures," belonging to Haraun al Raschid, surpass all others in India for beauty; but for Polly they had no charm save their vastness and solitude; for in the cool kiosk no sound could reach her but the voice of the pagoda thrush, so named as it delivers its song of melody from the sacred tree, and she loved to see the green and purple butterflies floating among the gorgeous flowers and the golden fruit of the orange groves.

There would Polly spend many a listless day, reclining on a divan with a little female gholaum kneeling near, to fan her pale face with the wings of an argus-pheasant.

One day her solitude was broken by Mirza Abubeker, who, dismissing the gholaum, seated

himself by her side, to press his suit, to which the novelty of her aversion gave every hour a greater piquancy.

A shuddering sigh of intense loathing escaped her, and she muffled her little hands in the ample folds of her muslin dress, lest he might presume to touch them with his cold, fat, flabby, and be-gemmed fingers. Yet this man had marked her for preservation, from an early period of the great conspiracy, and had chosen to save her when so many other European women and girls had perished miserably in that ever memorable week of May, which seemed to have passed years ago.

But there were times when this shrinking from him in eye and manner, and this aspect of helpless innocence enraged rather than pained or piqued the imperious Mogul prince.

"Still this repugnance!" said he, in good English; "how often must I remind you that it is worse than useless, and that you are in Delhi, so called because it is the *heart* of a mighty empire, which shall now be ours from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and from Brahmaputra to the Bay of Cambay, for all Hindostan shall become the heritage of the descendants of Timour."

But still the girl shuddered with annoyance, and with averted eye.

"May I add," he resumed, "what I have never

said before—that when I saw you, I felt that a new Queen of Delhi—really a second Nour Mahal—would ascend her throne; one worthy to sleep by my side in life, and to repose with me after death, in the tomb of Homaion.”

“ You forget, my lord,” urged poor Polly, for the twentieth time, “ that you have, at least, one wife already.”

“ No—I am not likely to forget the ill-tempered and childless Azeezun, certainly,” said the prince, bitterly.

“ And you seem to forget, too, that you are a second son, and that the son of your dead elder brother yet lives.”

“ But princes die sometimes,” replied Abubeker, glancing with his stealthy eyes at a tower near the Summun Boorj (where a foul tragedy had been enacted in his family and during his boyhood), and unconsciously revealing the dark designs he cherished against his nephew and his brother Mogul; “ forget your father’s house and all his household. What was he, but an unbelieving Moulvie, and what were the rest but infidels? That you should regret them is absurd; moreover what is done, is done! Think only of the pleasures I can accord you; the silks, the jewels, the splendours, the pageantry, the slaves, the spoil by which I can surround you; and think of the ad-

miration of our people, should you bear a son to Mirza Abubeker !”

“ Oh,” cried Polly, shuddering more than ever, and covering her wan face with her hands, and the masses of her hair ; “ this insolence is too much !”

“ Still weeping, girl ?” exclaimed the prince, who had been eyeing her amorously ; “ ah—you long for Calcutta and the iron ships that go there by fire from Allahabad ; but, by the shirt of the Prophet, none of those things shall you ever see more ! A little time, and from being angered, I shall learn to hate you. Grief, which is unavailing, and despair, which is sinful, are dimming the bloom of your youth, the lustre of your beauty, and more than all—”

“ Well, my lord ?” asked the weak voice.

“ They rather disgust me.”

It was somewhat in this style that Pershad Sing had threatened Kate.

Polly gave one of her dolorous, half sob-like sighs.

“ Do you know that you are beautiful ?” he asked, after a long pause.

“ No ;” was the blunt reply.

“ Did your mirror never show that you were so ?”

“ No.”

"Have those dull infidels been so blind that none have ever said so to you?"

"Yes—many have told me so," replied Polly, almost spitefully; "and I believed them—for I loved them all dearly."

Abubeker's black, beady eyes glittered with rage; but, dissembling, he asked softly—

"And who were those discerning persons?"

"My dear papa, my sweet sisters, my cousin Dicky Rivers, and ever so many more," said Polly, melting into a passion of tears. Then suddenly changing her manner from gentleness and helplessness, she turned upon him, with her eyes full of anger, and added—

"Enough of this cruelty, folly, and insult, my lord; speak to me but once again of your odious love, and I may forget that I am a Christian woman, and kill myself—that is, if I can but find the means!"

Polly had been considered and spoken of by her own family, as "a good-hearted little soul, with no great share of brains—a child," and so forth; but there were times now, when she had all the fierce resolution of a heroine.

In her father's house the poor girl had been a harmless, juvenile flirt, though, like many who were her seniors, she was vain enough to love all the admiration she could get, whether from Pat

Doyle, Horace Eversly, Frank Temple, or any one else ; but there was a corner in her heart for one she loved better than any of them, and who, in ways and years, was more akin to herself—her cousin, the saucy boy ensign, Richard Rivers, of the 6th Bengal Infantry, who had, not long before these events, been appointed from the school at Addiscombe.

“ Poor dear Dicky,” Polly had said to herself, a thousand times, “ what may have become of him, and of little Willie, too ? Doubtless he and the poor pet lamb are dead,” she would add, and there was a melancholy comfort in the idea that all their sufferings were over.

And now, as regards Dicky Rivers, we may as well close this chapter by simply informing the reader of what Polly was fated never, perhaps, to know.

In the melancholy history of the Indian mutiny few episodes are more striking than the fate of Dicky Rivers.

In the confusion of the flight from Delhi, and the dusk of the night, he became separated from all, and after seeking in vain for a friend or even a European companion, and seeing only flashing musketry and infuriated Indians everywhere, he threw away his epaulettes, and all that might serve to impede his progress, or lead to detection.

Crouching like a hare, at times, he crept along the road by the Shah-al-Imar garden, crossed the Jumna, by a ford, and proceeded for safety he knew not whither.

After innumerable hair-breadth escapes, sore sufferings, and adventures for weeks, in some instances daring even to beg his way, fording rivers, hiding amid jungle grass, in groves and fields of growing grain, and after once having to ascend a tree to avoid a tiger, he reached the Ganges, accompanied by an old scripture-reader of Dr. Weston's, whom he met near Ahmedgur.

At the holy river, he was favoured by an old native boatman, who took pity on his youth and terrible misery, and to whom he offered a valuable bribe for a conveyance to his regiment, the 6th, which was stationed nearly three hundred miles down the river at Allahabad, where it mutinied in June, and after destroying in the usual fiendish manner, nearly every European, set off to swell the horde of disciplined desperadoes in Delhi.

But Rivers was not fated to reach the station; at that part of the river which passes Cawnpore, they heard the cannonading of Nana Sahib against the unfortunate people who were shut up in the fatal intrenchment there, and the boatman, having in his terror abandoned them, Rivers and

his companion found themselves impelled to join a band of wretched fugitives, who had just arrived from Futteghur, and who, to the number of a hundred and twenty-six persons, hovered with their children at the passage of the Ganges, in a state of exhaustion and despair.

Turning his cannon on them, the relentless Nana gave them the alternative of being sunk in the stream or yielding to his mercy. Some trusted to flight, and so perished ; others accepted his promised protection, and their fate too was soon sealed. The women and children were at once dispatched by swords and spears ; the men he ranged in a line, with their arms secured behind them, and to a long bamboo pole, and after a protracted course of taunts and petty torture, they were slain by the cavalry, who, in succession, pistolled every alternate man so that his shattered head might drop, right or left upon his neighbour, and in this way was prolonged for hours the awful contact of the living with the dead.

Feigning death by the advice of the scripture reader (who, like himself, was covered with the blood of their companions), they both contrived to elude the pistolling, to escape from amid the ghastly pile—the cords which bound them to the bamboo pole having become relaxed when so many died—and under the shade of night, they were

creeping away, when a few roving Mohammedan troopers discovered them.

These men seized them both, and supposing that now indeed the end was come, the naturally bold and defiant spirit of the boy led him to mock and scorn those who were to be his destroyers, and who by the advice of the ubiquitous dervish, Hafiz Falladeen, then on a mission to the Nana, dragged them to the front of a little mosque, in one of the deep ravines which break the monotony of the sandy plain of Cawnpore; and there about sunrise, the dervish who had discovered in the catechist one whom he deemed an expounder of false doctrine, gave them both the option of becoming Mussulmans or being put to a terrible death.

"Become what?" asked Dicky Rivers, not quite understanding the fierce propoundings of the dervish.

"They wish us to adopt the turban," groaned the missionary, a feeble man, well up in years; "to become—Mussulmans!"

"To turn Niggers?" exclaimed Dicky, eyeing, without flinching, the dark faces, the cruel gleaming eyes, and naked swords of the Mohammedan sowars; "I'll see them all in a hotter climate than India, before I do so."

"But consider your life—and—and my life," moaned the Scripture-reader, wringing his hands.

"What care I for my life? They have taken the lives of all my friends—of all I have loved in this world. Moreover, I have been so long in the jungle, my good fellow, that civilization is nearly jungled out of me," continued Dicky, "and by the living jingo, I am now as savage as a Pandy, as squalid and dirty as a Blackheath gipsy."

"Accursed infidels!" exclaimed the dervish, closing a long torrent of disjointed sentences from the Koran; "if you believe not the voice of the Prophet, then how shall even a miracle convince you?"

"Here, you absurd old fellow," said Dicky, while his face grew pale, and his lips quivered with the rage and grief he strove to conceal under a brave bearing; "cut it short, now! I was pretty well stuffed with your beastly Hindostanee at Addiscombe, and I don't want it here; so enough of this rubbish, which no fellow can understand." Then turning to the troopers, he added, "and now, you nigger scoundrels, Tippoo Sahib, Hyder Ali, Timour the Tartar, or whatever you call yourselves, blaze away, and make an end of it!"

"At your birth, O Infidel," resumed the dervish, speaking solemnly in his native language, while the fires of insanity and fanaticism seemed to mingle in his hollow eyes, "and at thine, O

Moulvie, as at the births of all, whether to be reared as true believer or false idolater, Azrael, the angel of Death, was present unseen, to write upon our foreheads the hour in which we shall die ; so that it lies not with ourselves to protract existence—yet it may be that your hour is not come, if you renounce your false creed and embrace ours. Transient as sunbeams are the joys of this world ; but the joys of the future are everlasting, and are for those—and those only—who fear, love and believe in the only Prophet of God !”

The etourdi bearing of the young ensign, of the slangy cadet, of the mere saucy English school-boy, changed altogether now, and something grand and sublime came over the spirit of Rivers ; he felt that his career was soon to be ended, anyway, and he resolved, as he thought, to die game ! He turned his pale young face to the glorious sun of the Indian morning, to the brilliant flowers, to the drooping palms and feathery foliaged tamarind tree, and surveyed the beauties of the opening day that would have no close for him.

In that brief moment, there was a singular rush of memory in his soul, and he seemed to live all his past life of some seventeen happy years over again ; his joyous infancy, his boisterous school-

days, his home, the voices and faces of his parents, his boyish dreams and sentiments, his first ambitions, his manlier hopes—all were present with him, and were to be ended now without the regrets of age, or the terrors of a mis-spent life.

“Renounce!” cried the dervish, pointing to the mosque, with his long, lean, and talon-like fingers; “renounce!”

Rivers turned to him, and said boldly—

“*Never!*”

Then to the Scripture-reader he added—

“‘He who denies me in this world, him will I deny before my Father, which is in heaven;’ so did my dear dead mother teach me, and now I must not forget her rearing. Good-bye—a short farewell to you, my dear sir,” continued Dicky, pressing the trembling hands of the Scripture-reader, who—as he afterwards confessed—was on the verge of making some pretended concession, so shaken was his nervous system, so great his terror of death; “I thank you sincerely for all the good advice you have given me in our useless flight—useless indeed, as we had better have perished among those we loved in Delhi. But praise be to Heaven, I stand in need of no encouragement now. I shall continue faithful and steadfast to the end, which is so nigh, and no power or fear on earth shall lure me, even in

mockery, to deceive creatures such as these, by denying for a moment, Him who is in heaven !”

Then the old Scripture-reader, inspired by the divine enthusiasm of the boy, wept and said—

“Right, my good youth ; you are stronger of heart than I, and you nobly remind me of my duty. Let us believe and trust in Him you have named, and we shall pass in triumph through this awful ordeal.”

“Yes ! in due season,” exclaimed Rivers, with true religious fervour, “we shall reap if we faint not. Now do your worst, benighted wretches !” he shouted in Hindostanee, while his eyes sparkled, and his pale cheek flushed ; “I spit upon your false prophet, and defy you !”

But the sentence was barely uttered, when with yells of “Deen, deen !” twenty swords were flashed in the morning sun, all was over, and the spirit of the brave boy—of *the martyr*—was at rest.

The old Scripture reader was also cut down, and left for dead ; but he contrived to achieve an escape in the end, as the troopers departed instantly for Delhi.

CHAPTER XXI.

POLLY'S NOTE.

OF the little child, Willie, all trace had been lost, though Mirza Abubeker, not in a spirit of humanity, but merely to gratify Polly, had ordered inquiries to be made, as it was alleged that some of the Hindoos had secreted European children, with the intention of offering them, in November, as sacrifices to the Ganges, into which the Jumna flows. Doctor Weston, however, was still surviving, though a confirmed invalid, and confined to a poor charpoy, in that dull, damp, and ill-lighted chamber of the Sallyport Tower, in which he had been placed when first brought to the palace, and where he had been kept alive solely for the purpose that his daughter (or daughters, should the others be caught) might be terrified into compliance with anything as the price of his existence; and there daily and

nightly, on his knees, the poor old man, so lonely and bereaved, prayed for the safety of his children, if surviving, for their future welfare, if dead ; for he was one of those who believed that the heartfelt prayers of the living for the departed could not be without avail.

"Alas !" he would say, as he pressed his wrinkled hands upon his hollow and throbbing temples ; "I am desolate and forlorn—abandoned ! Job seated in his woe among the ashes—the beggar, with his sores and sorrows, at the rich man's gate, were never more miserable than I. Oh ! whose grief is like unto mine ? My sweet daughters—my tender children—my desolated home ! Yet the mercies of God are great, and I must bear my cross, even as One greater than all mankind bore it before me. But my children—my children !" and then it was that the vulture seemed to prey upon his vitals—the iron to enter his soul !

Yet he strove to teach himself resignation ; but the attempt was vain, for the strings of his inner heart were torn asunder.

Polly, we have said, had been again and again assured that her father still existed, though a prisoner in the palace, and consequently she had never ceased to implore Abubeker, and others, to permit them to meet ; but was invariably told

that now no man, not even her father, might look upon her face again, till one day, when with her in the kiosk, the prince suggested that she should send a note, to which the Doctor might reply, as a proof that he was still living.

Tremulous with haste, too gladly did Polly avail herself of this unexpected permission. Her note contained but a few words, to the effect that she was as yet safe, but sick and ailing; that she implored him to write or send some token that he yet lived—even his signature—and to reply by the bearer.

To Baboo Bulli Sing—who was now almost daily engaged in active military duty, and who wore a gorgeous Oriental dress, with a plumed mahratta cap of steel, having around it a tippet of mail, all the gift of Nana Sahib—the note was entrusted; and from the garden of the zenana he repaired to the great pile of red stone, known as the Sallyport Tower, while Polly awaited the reply with an intensity of anxiety that rendered her oblivious of the presence of Abubeker, who, with crooked knees, was seated by her side, and retained one of her hands in his clasp, as the reward of his vast condescension.

The female gholaum to whom Baboo gave the Doctor's answer, presented herself, with forehead bowed on the verge of the carpet, in the kiosk,

but ere she could deliver it, Polly, with a wild cry, snatched it from her.

It *was* from her father, and contained his signature, with a line, or little more—

“I still linger here, my beloved child; but feel that I cannot do so long—the powers of life grow feebler every day. Pray for me.

“Delhi, 29th May.”

The sight of his familiar writing, though tremulous and somewhat changed, filled her with a species of transport; she sank on her knees, she kissed it, and placed it in her bosom, only to draw it forth to read and kiss it again and again. Then she threw herself before Abubeker, and implored him in the most touching manner to take her to where her parent was confined; to let her hear his voice—to see his face, but once again.

“Oh! my papa—my sisters!” she exclaimed; “I never knew till now how much I really loved you all! If we meet no more in this world, we shall do so in the next, where there shall neither be parting or sorrow.”

The light that came into her eyes, the flush that pervaded her cheek, the new and imploring expression, with the general animation that filled her features, gave a strange radiance to her beautiful face; the ardour of the flabby Abubeker

became kindled anew, and in his anxiety to gratify her, he actually desired Baboo Sing to conduct her to the vault where her father lay.

“Take her to the old unbelieving dog,” he whispered, in Hindostanee, “and let them meet, but only to part more surely; for talking of dogs reminds me that the cur of Captain Douglas still prowls about the palace; and, by the shirt of Mohamed! if this Feringhee girl continues thus obstinate, I shall strike off the heads of her father and the cur, and transpose them before her, as a hint of what may be her own fate. Wah-wah—shabash—go!”

Feeble though she was, Polly had sprung to her feet on the instant when the prince had accorded his permission, and followed Baboo Bulli Sing through the garden, past the stately façade of the dewan khana, to the tower of the Sally-port. Higher rose her pulses, more wildly beat her heart; she was as if in a dream—a dream of strangely mingled ecstasy and sorrow, when she drew near the place, and saw the little arched door, and heard the sound of the lock, as Baboo put the key in it.

Her heart was tremulous with affectionate expectation; there was a wonderful pathos, joy, and yearning, in her voice—all of which the ex-Thug could not understand—as she exclaimed, while pressing her hands upon her breast—

“Papa—my own papa—I am here! I am here! Oh, what shall I do to save you?—to—to—”

But then her words ended in a shrill cry, that passed into a wail of despair, as she shrunk back and clutched the flowing dress of the Baboo, (which means esquire) to save herself from falling.

On the miserable charpoy, or native bed, worn almost to a skeleton, wasted by confinement and sorrow, the poor clergyman lay dead, with her little note pressed against his heart, for the sight of her handwriting, and of her name, with his joy on thus hearing of the safety of at least one of his children, had proved too much for his sorely weakened system. Some palsy of the heart had been the result, and he had expired almost the moment her messenger had left him.

The unhappy girl, on witnessing this appalling spectacle, became, as it were, almost fatuous. She gazed upon her father as he lay extended in angular rigidity under the coverlet, while a ray of sunlight that poured aslant through the small and grated window, streamed full upon his face, and the breeze that came from the Jumna, lifted at times, his thin, white, silvery hair.

In death the wrinkles were already vanishing from the pale and livid face; his cheek and brow were fast becoming smooth—yea, smoother than

her own, and in a little time he would have seemed younger than she could ever remember him.

She touched his withered hand.

Then the strange electric chill of its deadly coldness struck horror to her heart ; another terrible cry escaped her ; she flung herself wildly on the floor, and from thence some women of the zenana bore her once more to her former apartment—the cuchuc oda. . . .

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE CUCHUC ODA.

SHE was again prostrated by fever and illness, and committed to the care of dark and ignorant slave women, who thought all her ailings were wisely and abundantly attended to, if written slips of the Koran were tied as charms about her wrists and neck ; and more than all, because she had the use of a beautiful little bed, with posts entirely of silver, cut and chased, and having white ivory feet and drapery of yellow cashmere shawls.

It was like a dream to her—for she had no certainty of anything now, save a bitter repugnance of Abubeker, which bordered on insanity—that she had seen more than once, sitting opposite to this bed, and propped on luxurious cushions, two women, both young and handsome, but of imperious aspect, very dark complexioned,

with rings in their right nostrils, rings in their ears, on their thumbs and fingers, coils of snowy pearls and brilliant rubies round their necks, both with flowing veils and rich attire, and both smoking the tiniest of hookahs, while they quietly conversed and curiously surveyed her.

When they disappeared, Polly thought simply that her dream was over, and that they were only a portion of the phantasmagoria that surrounded her now.

But these visitors were the Sultana Zeenat Mahal, and Azeezun, the chief wife of Abubeker, who were consulting as to how they might rid the palace of her quietly during some of the absences of the Prince with the cavalry; and neither the jealous Azeezun, or the former royal lady, were likely to be very particular as to the intended mode of riddance.

In the adjoining tower, the Summun Boorj, in 1856, died the eldest son of Mohamed Bahadur Shah, a prince named Ferruk-od-deen, a handsome man in the prime of life—the victim of cholera, said some, of foul play said the authorities at Calcutta, for there were dark rumours of a pomegranate from the garden of Shah al Imar, pricked all over, impregnated with a deadly poison, and given to him by the hands of Zeenat Mahal, his step-mother, the last matrimonial

choice of the dotard, his father, her object being to make way for her own son, on whom he lavished all his affection, as the child of his old age; and, but for the suspicions then excited, the Mirzas Mogul and Abubeker might each have been favoured with a pomegranate in turn.

What course Polly's destiny might have had in the hands of those ladies, it may not be difficult to guess; but as both conceived the victim to be dying—so unearthly seemed the whiteness of her skin—they resolved to leave her to her *kismet* or fate, as the vengeance of Mirza Abubeker would not have been pleasant, had he suspected them of any treachery towards her.

To amuse her, he was about to have constructed under her window, a great draft board of black and white marble slabs, after the fashion of that on which his ancestor the Emperor Akbar played, the figures being sixteen beautiful female slaves, who were all carried off by the winner; but the advance of the insolent Feringhees from Umballa, soon cut out other work for him, and all who were in Delhi.

Seated at the open window in the lofty tower of the cuchuc oda, which commanded a view of the flat country far beyond the bastions, the dome of St. James's church, and away to where the ruins of the British cantonments stood, she was

seldom weary of gazing northward, in the desperate hope of seeing some succour or sign thereof appear, for hope refused to accept the tale, that the Europeans had been completely exterminated.

As for the palace in the immediate foreground of this view, its vastness and grandeur excited only her disgust. "It is an immense structure," says a traveller, "all built of stone, with buttresses and ramparts, and looks like an exaggerated scene of Timour the Tartar, and as if little Agib was to be thrown immediately from the highest tower, and Fatima to be constantly wringing her hands on the top of the battlements."

One day along the line of the old cantonments, where the British have held their camp ever since the old days of Assaye—that field of glory where our Macleod Highlanders won their triple standard and silver war-pipes—she saw the gleam of arms, and red masses of men begin to form in columns along the ridge of rocks, while a terrible hubbub became apparent within the walls of the city, when drums were beaten, and gongs, bells and ghurries clanged.

The sound of bugles, too, came at times upon the wind, for this was the morning of the 8th of June, when our army appeared before Delhi.

A torrent of grateful tears fell from the eyes of the girl, and partially relieved her; the dreamy and delirious thoughts which had so long oppressed her gave place to coherency; she threw herself on her knees and prayed fervently to Heaven for the success of those who were now hovering like a stormy cloud over Delhi, for in every soldier in yonder ranks, she welcomed a brother—a deliverer!

“Wah! wah!” said Abubeker, who had drawn near her, unperceived in her joy; “let their drums beat, and their cannons be heard,” he added mockingly; “know you not that the huma, the sacred bird which never touches the ground, but floats for ever in the air, has hovered over the aged head of Mohamed of Delhi, and so surely as it has done so, shall he be a victorious king!”

But even as he spoke, the clear notes of the Kentish bugles rung out on the ambient air, and the dark line of the 60th Rifles, extended in skirmishing order, and covered by the gallant Hodson’s band of Horse, began to descend the ridge of rocks towards the Cashmere Gate.

CHAPTER XXIII.

* * * * *

DURING the first days of the siege, the two Delhi princes shewed themselves reluctantly in various parts of the city, seated in the golden howdah of an elephant, or mounted on Kochlani steeds, whose written genealogy was said to have been preserved for two thousand years, as their descent was deduced from the horses of king Solomon ; but the ignorance of military matters displayed by the Mirzas Mogul and Abubeker, excited the derision of the sepoys, who laughed aloud to see them running after fragments of exploded shells and examining them with vacant and childish wonder.

After the arrival of the Bareilly mutineers, when the defence of Delhi was confided to their leaders, such as Mohamed Bukt Khan and others, the useless princes were gladly relieved from all duty by the old king, their father ; Mogul

secluded himself in the safest part of his zenana, and Abubeker had plenty of leisure to bestow upon the persecution of Polly Weston.

The powers of life and girlhood were too strong in her, to be crushed even by all she had endured, or to be destroyed by the keenness of her sorrow ; the daily din and clamour of the siege, and the booming of the breaching batteries, all served to inspire a hope that she might yet be free, so she regained strength and beauty, even plumpness after a time ; but these changes only served to make the importunities of Mirza Abubeker more troublesome.

"No houri of paradise can be more beautiful than my little Feringhee girl," said he, as he sat one day in the kiosk, enjoying a hookah with Baboo Bulli Sing, about sunrise.

"Perhaps so, most high," responded the other, who saw that he wished to change the subject from the progress of the siege, a matter which rather bored his royal highness, "her eyes, if I may dare to observe that which hath found favour in your sight, are like the blue lotus of Cashmere, and her wondrous hair is like the beams of the sun."

"How came such a daughter of a cursed Feringhee father?" exclaimed the prince.

"She raises a wish and a sigh in the heart of every man who looks on her."

"Save myself no man shall see or sigh over her ; but, by the soul of Solymaun, if she trifles with me much longer, I shall have her blown from the mouth of a mortar !"

As the prince spoke, a large shell, shot from the battery at the Koodsee Bagh, little more than a quarter of a mile from the palace wall, fell into the garden with a shrill whistling sound, and exploded with a tremendous crash, scattering the trees and bushes in every direction.

Abubeker turned almost skyblue.

"So close already !" said he.

"Yes, most high," replied the other, who was a man of undoubted courage, "and with your permission, I shall rejoin my men at the Moora Bastion to which this new battery is immediately opposed."

Baboo Bulli started to his feet, adjusted his sabre and pistols, and making a low salaam to conceal the scorn of the prince's timidity and indolence that glittered in his eyes, he hurried away. Abubeker listened to the thunder of the cannonade, and the sound offended his royal ears ; he then looked at the fragments of the shell, and seemed to think he had been quite long enough

there, so he quitted the kiosk, and went straight to the apartment of his victim.

His soft slippers permitted him to come quite near, unknown to her ; there was no door to open, but simply a silken curtain to draw aside, so he came close to Polly, who had half risen and was half reclining in the silver bed, and with her head propped on her hand, was watching the smoke wreaths of the cannon, as they curled snow-white in the sunshine above the ruins of the arsenal, those of the college, and the dome of St. James's church. Close sounded the cannon now, for those at the Koodsee Garden, were a mile and a half nearer Delhi, than the first batteries !

Her bright soft hair fell in a silky volume down her back, and the thin transparent muslin of her night-dress, permitted the pure whiteness of her skin to be visible through it. Suddenly she became aware of the presence of Abubeker, and shrunk down on her pillow, closing her eyes with intense disgust, as she muttered—

“ Oh, that man—always that man—that torment !”

A visit such as this, though a shocking violation of all propriety in European society, was of course a very ordinary affair in the zenana at Delhi.

Endeavouring to blend with a smile, the dangerous gleam that came into his face, he said—

“Heed not the sound of the cannon; the deluded infidels without there, are few in number, and shall soon be destroyed. The smoke of the powder is unpleasant, so look into the parterres below your window. I do not think that the Garden of the Eternal Abode—may the Prophet forgive me—can be more beautiful than ours; yet to please you, my beloved girl, I would ransack Jinnistaun, the Country of Delight, and rob the City of Jewels, to lay their treasures at your feet!”

“Restore my father to life!” said Polly calmly and sternly, for this bombast disgusted her.

“You ask of me that which is impossible.”

“Restore me to my people yonder.”

“That too is impossible,” replied the Prince, pressing his fat fingers together, and half closing his almond shaped eyes.

As usual, he endeavoured to take one of her hands in his, but Polly resisted this, and had a new expression in her face to-day; the light of hope, and desire for retribution, shone in her blue eyes, and flushed her cheek. She could hear that the firing was closer now, and she had seen the shell explode in the garden of the palace, from whence a thousand beautiful birds had fled to the roofs and towers.

Her bearing was proud and defiant, yet the

poor girl was feeble, and though recovering, unable to quit her bed ; but she turned from him impatiently and wearily. Abubeker had never before been treated thus ; passionate and resentful, he was a man whom the mere fact of defeat or opposition was sufficient to pique and exasperate, be the object in view, however great or small.

"Speak to me," said he, placing his brown but effeminate hands on her shoulders, and turning her forcibly round.

Pride, anger, and opposition in Polly were fast taking the place of suffering, of heart-ache, and utter despair. Her father was beyond the reach of mortal torment or protection now ; and when another shell fell with a crash on the roof of the Dewan Khana, and exploded with a thundering sound in the marble court below, the girl laughed—for the first time since that marriage morning—and actually laughed merrily.

"You have heard me?" resumed Abubeker, in whose heart rage began to rise ; "I tell you that if every leaf in yonder trees was each a tongue, they could not tell how much I love. Feringhee girl, you hear me?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You remember all I have said so often."

"I remember too much, at all events," replied Polly, still watching the smoke wreaths at the Koodsee Bagh.

"And the answer is to be the same—that you will not love me in return?"

"I tremble, my lord, to say again the words I have said so often, lest I rouse your anger, and I am, as you see, but a helpless girl. I do not, and never can, love you."

"But that does not prevent me loving you," he urged.

"Ah, my lord," cried poor Polly, shuddering and closing her eyes, for she read in those of Abubeker a more dangerous and gloomy expression than she had ever seen before; "ask me anything but this."

"Fool, and daughter of a fool! What could the son of Mohamed Bahadoor Shah require at the hands of a Feringhee girl?"

"If my life will please you, take it, and let me die in peace."

"Yield to me," he continued, while his grasp tightened on her slender waist, and his breath, heavy with the perfumed or drugged tobacco of his hookah, came odiously and oppressively close to her, despite her resistance and shrinking; "let your will stoop to mine, or beware the fate by which so many have perished. Think of it, girl, for it is terrible."

"You talk to me thus, and yet dare to say you

'love me?" said Polly, scorn mingling with her terror.

"Dare!" exclaimed Abubeker, almost scared by her temerity.

"Yes, wretch, dare!" continued Polly, in a voice rendered tremulous by the rage that mingled with her other emotions.

The face of Abubeker was very close to her, for he had been attempting to obtain a kiss, and he had already placed an arm forcibly round her, when a sudden frenzy seemed to fire her spirit.

With her quick little hands she struck the splendid turban from his head and dashed it away, scattering the brilliants which sparkled amid its folds; she then seized him by the beard, and rent and tore it from him in handfuls, as she twisted his hateful face away from its vicinity to her own.

The pain this gave him was exquisite—the sense of insult, bewildering. The copper—almost golden-coloured face—of Abubeker, became a species of ghastly or slaty grey; his eyes were absolutely blazing, and his nostrils were working and quivering with rage. He shrunk breathlessly back, and furiously eyed the girl, who lay on her pillow, pale, and panting with the handfuls of his sacred and cherished beard clutched in her

fingers, from which she cast them with intense disgust.

"Most accursed Feringhee," said he, in a low and hoarse voice, "be assured I shall have a terrible revenge for this act of desecration!"

At that moment a step and voice were heard without. They were those of Baboo Sing, who was calling for the prince in excited tones. The soubadar had come back from the Moora Bastion as fast as his carriage could carry him, for he had appropriated the entire "turn out" of Colonel Patna Rhys, just as other natives had seized upon the horses and vehicles of the slain Feringhees.

"Oh, protector! oh, supporter of the world!" he was crying, "where is the king?—where is the Shah Zadah Mogul? All is lost—the Kaffirs triumph!"

"Solymaun ibn Daood!" said the prince, furiously, "it would seem so when you dare to penetrate even here. Why are you so terrified?"

"I am *not* terrified," replied Baboo, who was a man without fear or scruple, but he was rather surprised by the disordered appearance of the Mirza, who said—

"Then speak in the name of the most merciful!"

"Oh, most high, this is no time for loitering in the zenana; the stormers are already before the Cashmere Gate, and in another hour may be

within the heart of Delhi—our men are yielding in every quarter. The Lahore Gate is on the point of being abandoned; you and the Mirza Mogul *must* shew yourselves, or all may be lost!”

“So be it,” said Abubeker, who had never before been thus addressed, as he turned to the pale, feeble, and now half fainting girl; “sha-bash! at last—at last, infamous Feringhee, I shall teach you the penalty of thus trifling with your master—the holder of your life! Hark, Baboo,” he continued, speaking thickly, so much was he now overcome by rage and the hate which inspired him; “get a twelve pound gun from Mohamed Bukt Khan, the aga of the artillery; tie her hand and foot to the trail of it; let her be dragged by gholandazees to the Kotwally, and there to the budmashes of the city, and the Kudalas of the gutters, let her be abandoned, since she will not be mine! On peril of your head, let this be done!”

And with a fierce malediction he retired.

Though the hapless girl did not understand one word of all this terrible sentence, a piercing shriek escaped her when she was torn from her bed; her muslin night dress rent from her by coarse, remorseless hands, and she was then dragged down the white marble stair of the Cuchuc-Oda.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BLOWN FROM THE GUNS.

ON the morning of the day after Colonel Rudkin's fall, while yet the Indian sun was lingering at the flat horizon, the whole of the troops that could be spared from the investment were drawn up under arms to witness a terrible scene, but one of those which were almost of daily occurrence now before Delhi, and, indeed, throughout Bengal, the execution of captured mutineers and their abettors.

Hot and crimson the huge round sun, half shorn of his beams amid the haze of the rainy season, shed his splendour along the plain; the city of Delhi, with dome and tower, mosque and minar, stood in dark outline, all of an indigo tint against the light, which cast their shadows far across the wilderness of tombs, graves, and gardens, even to the base of the rocks on which

the cantonments stood. Away in distance, the Jumna flowed between its green banks like a flood of ruby wine, whose shadows deepened to muddy chocolate.

The level glare of the sun shone full upon the open plateau named the British Camp Parade, near the once fashionable Race Course—where portions of the three brigades formed three sides of a square—the fourth, towards the Ochterlony Garden, being open ; and there stood ten field pieces, all twelve pounders, with the European gunners ranked by the wheels, and a great body of Indian prisoners, all partially clad, in sepoy uniforms or native dresses, a dark, sullen, and resentful band, assembled to look their last upon the rising sun.

The Punjab Infantry, the smart little Ghoorkha battalions, and one of Sikhs in flowing white dresses, the Queen's 75th, and the Bengal Fusiliers were ordered to fix their bayonets, and the lines of steel flashed in the sun, as the brigades "shouldered arms ;" the ranks were opened and the officers took post in front of their companies.

On the left of the well guarded prisoners, was the military burial ground, a habitation that had received many tenants of late ; on their right lay the little place named Rajpoora, and in their rear

lay the canal from the Nujjufghur Ghil, or Morass, and the far extent of open country, towards which they turned their haggard eyes, in the hopelessness of escape, guarded as they were by the Queen's Carbineers and 9th Lancers.

A stern and determined expression could be read in the faces of their captors, but more particularly in the ranks of the justly exasperated British soldiers who were there that day, to avenge such atrocities against the laws of civilization, religion and common humanity, as had not been committed since the time of Nadir Shah.

Many a loved face was remembered now, and many a little voice that was hushed for ever, and under their red jackets, the hearts of husbands and fathers were turned as if to flinty stone !

To Jack Harrower, who, on this morning, was acting as Brigade-major to the Meerut force, was assigned the duty of calling aloud the names of the prisoners with the sentences of the General Drum-head Court-martial which had tried them ; and the whole affair was very briefly done, after the entire body of culprits, some sixty in number had been marched slowly round the great hollow square, guarded by their cavalry escort and once again were halted in rear of those ten terrible field pieces, which the Royal Artillerymen were

loading—ramming the charges home—with a coolness quite professional.

“Forward with the first batch of wretches!” said Harrower, letting his reins drop on the holsters as he unfolded an official paper; “how many are in this squad, Provost Marshal?”

“Ten, sir.”

“Kurrem Shere Khan, jemidar of the 2nd Oude Military Police;” Harrower read in Hindoostanee; “Heera Sing, soubadar of the 15th Native Infantry; Munroop Pandy, a peon; Hafiz Falladeen, a dancing Dervish; Murdan Sing, sowar of the 6th Cavalry; Assim Alee, footman to Doctor Weston; Ferukh Pandy, footman to Captain Harrower of the Queen’s 32nd; Shookier Alee, gholandazee of artillery; Harroun and Selim Azoreppa, brothers, and both sowars of the 3rd Cavalry; all declared guilty of aiding or abetting in the murder of many Europeans, but more especially of certain women, girls, and children, officers and soldiers, all British subjects, with outrage and robbery, all of which are heinous offences under the provisions of the Act 16, of 1857, passed by the Legislative Council of India, and involve the penalty of death.

“Sentence; to be tied each to a gun and blown to pieces.”

Though this was the punishment those dastards were all expecting (being the same to which they had subjected Sir Mountstuart Jackson and many others) yet the words of the sentence caused a thrill of horror to pervade them, and their copper-coloured visages assumed a pea green tint, for this is the only form of death that has any terrors for the Hindoostanee. If shot, or slain by the sword, he knows that his friends will be permitted to claim and inhume his remains, according to the rites of his religion; if a Mohammedan, that he will be decently interred with his toes tied together, his turban spread over his face and his eyes turned towards Mecca; if a Hindoo, that his body will be solemnly burned amid such spices and ceremonies as his relatives can provide; but when blown to atoms, as it was certain to be, the task of collecting them would be beyond the ardour of the most affectionate kinsman; and the horror and loathing of being interred with *other* men's legs, arms or fragments, made to each culprit the agony of anticipated death, insupportable!

Creed and caste all went for naught now, and they believed themselves to be—like those whom Neil compelled under the lash to stoop amid the blood in the fatal room at Cawnpore—lost in this world and damned in that to come.

Yet, steeped to the lips as they were in wanton atrocity, no man pitied their misery, and the artillerymen actually smiled with grim and stern satisfaction, as they bound by ropes, the first ten culprits, with their backs placed fairly against the black, round muzzles of the 12 pounders, and their arms drawn backward to the wheels, so that to stir was impossible; but during this process they were all praying, expostulating or speaking together.

“Oh, Brahma!” howled Ferukh Pandy, who was still grotesquely attired in the rags of Harrower’s old uniform; “I have drunk wine and eaten of a sacred crow—I have cleaned boots and worn leather! I have lost caste, and committed many sins, and would now—were I out of the hands of those accursed English dogs—roll on my sides a thousand miles to the Ganges and the Indus, as a pilgrim, to wash, in their holy waters, all my sins away!”

The dervish, Hafiz Falladeen, was loudly repeating the profession of his faith, and then turning fiercely to the major of artillery, who was superintending the cording, he said—

“God forgiveth every one, at least once, even the lowest kindala whom the idolater Menou made the outcast of mankind. Wah—wah! Art thou, O, sahib, greater then, than God, not to forgive at all?”

Assim Alee, the poor doctor's kitmutgar, had been robbed by his fellow prisoners of all his Budmash finery, and now the tall, lean, and brawny ruffian, with long raven hair floating on the wind, and visage fierce but unmoved, stood against the brass gun, clad only in a dhotee or rag round his waist. He neither spoke nor prayed now, but bit his nether lip till the blood trickled from it.

"Oh, sahibs," cried Ferukh Pandey and other Hindoos, in imploring accents, "don't put us into the earth, but cast us into the water, if you choose."

Not one of them repented of the actual crimes for which they were to suffer, though all knew that they had forgotten their "covenant of salt," for, as with all sacrifices salt was offered up, a covenant of it means a solemn treaty between man and man, and between men and their Maker, according to the Orientals.

"All is ready!" said the artillery officer, lowering his sword as he addressed the general.

"Then, Provost-marshal, do your duty," was the reply.

The gunners fell back to their places by the sides of the guns, and ten lighted port-fires were burned with a green and steady glare; but remorse on one hand or pity on the other were

there none. Even Pat Doyle's jovial heart was sealed up.

"There they are, the murdering heathens," he muttered, "quoting Brahma and Vishnu, the Koran, the shasters, and the writings of Rabbi Ragabash; but, if it was not to punish them in this world, and as they think, in that to come, I'd save the powder, Jack, and keep to that old institution which seems a standing one here—the gibbet."

"Fire!" cried the Provost-marshal.

The ten port-fires fell on the touch-holes; the ten field-pieces exploded together with the crash of a salvo.

A cloud of white smoke to the front—white, but streaked with a strange dark redness—a descending shower—but a shower of what? for all men stoop and shudder under it!

It was a falling rain of human fragments—of arms, legs, heads and portions of the mortal frames, the veritable rags and fitters of Hindoos and Mohammedans, all mingled together; and paler now, if possible, grew the faces of those who were to suffer, for the scene was indescribably a horrid one.

With brooms and baskets, the low caste camp-followers swept and took away the remains, and once more with the callousness the deeds of those

wretches had wrought in their hearts, our men reloaded their guns.

“Forward with the next squad of ten!” cried Harrower, and so the work of death went on, till nothing but a mass of fragments in a hole newly dug near the Race-course, remained of the prisoners, nearly every one of whom, as Harrower said, “died game to the back-bone, and with a pluck calculated to excite, if not pity, at least admiration.”

CHAPTER XXV.

NEMESIS.

ON an evening in the last days of August, a loud and continued cheering was heard along the British lines, and Harrower, on sending from the rough bungalow which had been hastily constructed for him on the ruins of his old one, to enquire the reason of the rejoicing, was informed that there had arrived in camp a European lady, who had just effected her escape from Delhi, where she had been concealed since the mutiny, in one of the Ty-kunas or under-ground houses; and this circumstance gave the greatest animation to the troops.*

* This lady was the wife of a civilian. Two chuprasies protected and got her out of the city. She was clad only in two pieces of cloth, one round her head, and the other round her body, and was in a deplorable condition when she reached Captain Bailey's piquet, where she

"We must have a weed and some wine on the head of this," said Harrower to Doyle and a few others, who, when not on duty, usually made his wigwam (as they named it) their rendezvous; "it makes me more hopeful of saving poor Polly Weston and the doctor."

"Yes," added Eversly, fanning his face with his solar topee (having reddened at the mention of Polly, for whom he always had a weakness) "once into Delhi, we must make a dash for the palace—blow in the gates by a field-piece, and scour the entire edifice."

"Whoever leads the stormers, I'll go with him, lame leg and all," said Doyle; "this bullet in the calf will mar my round dancing for many a day—or night I should rather say—but I hope to see little Miss Weston in all her bloom and glory yet, God bless her!"

All in camp were most anxious to bring matters to an issue in the city of Delhi, as the startling tidings had come, that a rebel named Khan Bahadoor Khan, an old native judge, long noted for his servility to the Company, had proclaimed him-

threw herself on her knees, among the soldiers, to thank Heaven for her deliverance. On reaching the camp, the general ordered a staff tent to be placed at her disposal, with every comfort that the place and time could afford.

self King of Rohilcund, and after inaugurating his accession by a fearful tragedy, was threatening to march upon the lonely mountain refuge at Ninee Tal, and to put to death every man, woman, and child, who found shelter there.

In camp there were no punkahs, of course, so the heat was terrible, and (as usual in India) every one made the stale joke of there being only a sheet of paper between Delhi and the *other* place.

"Well, well," said Doyle, some evenings after, as he lingered over a glass of pale sherry, from a bottle cooled in a tank; "when this disgusting work is over, we shall again enjoy the true comforts of an Indian life, the punkah overhead, the drenched tatty between us and the hot wind, the muslin curtains — ice thick with apples from America, salmon from Scotland, bitter beer from the Thames, sardines from the Mediterranean, and what more could man desire, barring, may be, potatoes from old Ireland?"

"At what hour do we fall in?" asked Tracy, of the Fusiliers, a plump, jolly Englishman, whom neither toil nor hunger had impaired as yet.

"Fall in — for what purpose?" asked Harrower.

"To attack the Cashmere Gate, of course."

"By Jove! I had forgotten; we have been making so many attacks of late, that one gets quite used to the thing."

"To-morrow morning, before daybreak, say the orders; and we advance in four columns of attack, with a reserve," said Frank Temple, of the 32nd, a habitually grave and rather reserved young fellow; "the Brigadier in person leads the Forlorn Hope."

"There, now; Frank is as good as a walking order-book; thanks, my boy, and pass the bottle—the brandy, I mean, this time," said Doyle; "I never drink anything stronger than brandy (barring, maybe, a little sup of whisky), or anything weaker than water. One quarter of water to three quarters of brandy, make the perfection of grog; a drop more of either—unless it be of brandy—spoils the mixture; and when taken, to be well shaken; there is a prescription for you, Bob Tracy."

"What news are in camp this evening?" asked the latter.

"Chiefly the preparations for the great event of to-morrow—"

"Two cases of sunstroke in the right attack," said Eversly; "a bungalow washed down by the rains, a Ghoorkha killed thereby, another strangled, no one knows how, unless by some ex-

Thug; and there has been a row among the Sikhs, because the 61st cut up a sacred cow close by their cantonments."

"Some Punjabees, drunk with bhang, and Britons ditto with brandy, make up the casualties of the evening," added Harrower, who was stretched at length on a piece of thick matting, with his linen puggeree very much over one ear, for coolness, a cigar between his teeth, and his head resting on one hand; "but all sentinels have orders to keep a sharp look out to-night, as the footprints of a tiger have been seen near the Pyrghib Mosque, among those shrubberies where the fire-flies are always thickest after dusk."

"And you really go to the front with us, Doyle, to-morrow?" asked young Temple, after a pause.

"I do, wound and all, though I'd rather leave it behind me," replied the cheerful Irishman, his keen eyes lighting up as he spoke; "Leigh Hunt wrote a mighty pleasant paper on the pleasures of being—not ill, but convalescent. Bedad! I wish he was here before Delhi, with a half-healed bullet wound in his leg, and the thermometer at boiling heat. But I shall not be the last man inside the Cashmere Gate to-morrow, anyhow, boys; and then, by the trout of Kilgavower! we'll cure the Messrs. Mogul and

Abubeker of their gallivanting propensities, or perish in the attempt, as the novels say—so here's a glass all round to our next merry meeting!"

"To our next merry meeting, when the bugle sounds!" muttered all, as they drained their glasses.

The breaching batteries had been served so well during a terrible cannonade of three days, that by the 14th of September three wide gaps in the Cashmere and Water Bastions were declared to be practicable, and in four great columns of attack the troops descended from the rocky ridge of the cantonments, in the gloomy dusk, while the sun was yet unrisen, and when a kind of haze enveloped the city and its surrounding plain.

Royal and Punjab Infantry, Bengal Europeans, Sikhs, Sirmoor and Kumaon Ghoorkhas, were all eager for the attack, their blood being heated by the long resistance and its consequent slaughter.

Harrower, Temple, and their little party, were with the 60th Rifles, whose orders were to assist the first column, which, under Brigadier Nicholson, was to storm the Cashmere Gate, while others forced the breaches. This body consisted of the 75th Stirlingshire Regiment, Mellon's corps, the 1st Bengal Fusileers, and the 2nd Punjabees.

The cavalry, under General Grant, guarded the lines, the sick, and the rear.

"Stormers of the 1st Brigade, fall in on the right of the 75th Foot, and cast loose your cartridges!" rang clearly in the still air, when the troops got under arms.

At three in the morning the first column moved deliberately, amid silence and darkness, out of the cantonments, where few had been able to snatch even an hour of sleep, and all were in the lightest marching order, having thrown away everything that might impede activity in the attack.

Down the slope they came, with the Light Infantry in front, passing Metcalfe House on the left, the Assembly Rooms on the right, and over the open ground between. Little was said by officers or men, and after a time almost perfect silence was maintained in the ranks as they advanced; but, could it have been seen amid the darkness, there was a stern—a terribly resolute and grim—expression in every eye and on every face. The lips of all were compressed; and it might have been seen how deeply into every heart had sunk the inhuman and sacrilegious slaughter of the helpless, and that, in this hour of strife, no mercy would be shown to the merciless!

Yet joking, as if at a hunting party, Doyle was .

heard to laugh more than once in the dark, as the line went stumbling on. Harrower, ere he left him, to press in front with the skirmishers, saw that he was pale and feeble.

"By Jove! Pat," said he, "you should be in the doctor's hands, and not here."

"Where else could I be at such a time, but with my men? and sure, ain't I taking the doctor's prescriptions regularly!"

"Whose?"

"Tim Riley, of ours, that's dead and gone—God rest him!"

"And what is it?"

"Devil a one o' me knows. 'Pilulæ, sac, sal, sass—three snakes' tails, two trombones, and a double bass,' as O'Callaghan has it, in the farce we played at Bareilly last year."

"Hush!—good-bye, Pat—there go the enemy's guns at last!"

At that moment, and just as a pale opal light stole suddenly over the whole eastern quarter of the sky—a light against which the masses of the beleaguered city stood forth in black outline—six twenty-four pound guns flashed redly from the Moora Bastion. The six-shot swept through the ranks of the Bengal Fusileers, and one of those who fell—literally cut in two—was poor Pat Doyle!

The attacking column was then just emerging from the Koodsee Bagh, and the shouts went up to Heaven.

"Remember the women and children — no quarter!" cried the 60th Rifles.

"No quarter—Cawnpore! Cawnpore!" cried the 75th men, while their pipes struck up, and with a sound more like a yell of rage than a genuine British cheer, they made a dash at the Cashmere Gate, led by the Brigadier in person.

Close by his side were Lieutenants Home and Salkeld of the Engineers, bearing petards to blow the gate open. The mutineers were all at their posts, and the whole walls of Delhi seemed as one line of bright and rolling fire in the dusk of the morning, so the assailants suffered terribly. Eversly fell severely wounded at the edge of the counterscarp, and was conveyed to a place of safety by Mellon.

Harrower had his horse shot under him, and then on foot, with a few of his men (poor Phil Ryder had been knocked over long before) covered the sappers, who were rushing onward to the gate.

The brave Brigadier was killed as the column poured tumultuously along a narrow lane through which the troops had to advance, and which was swept by round shot, grape, and musketry, even

“as a tunnel is swept by a fierce wind or penetrating torrent;” yet others took the lead, and the gallant young Engineer officers with their sappers, pressed on towards the Cashmere Gate, which was a barrier of vast size and strength, carrying their petards and powder bags, and stumbling every moment over the fast accumulating debris, the falling, the wounded, and the dead. The dense air was filled with the odour of gunpowder; at times a cannon shot struck the ground or walls with a crash; but when it pierced the dense ranks of the stormers, how different—how terrible was the muffled sound!

The morning light was fairly radiant now, and chosen marksmen were levelling their rifles in hundreds on the assailants. Many fell, but Lieutenant Home got close to the gate, literally scrambling over piles of bodies, and laid the bags against the barrier. At the moment he was about to fire the slow match, two bullets pierced him; he fell with a shrill cry of agony, and was dragged away in Harrower’s powerful grasp.

Then a resolute corporal, named Burgess, though lying near the gate mortally wounded, applied the smouldering match, and he perished, a noble martyr, in the dreadful explosion which blew planks and archway, cannon and tower, defenders

and everything into the air, amid a roaring whirlwind of shapeless ruin and blinding dust.

The third column, which had now come up, under Colonel Campbell, burst through the gap, and under a dreadful fire from housetops, windows, and balconies, poured along into Chandney Choke, maddened by the awful spectacle of several Christian women stripped nude, and crucified by the hands and feet—crucified in terrible mockery of the Saviour—against the stone walls inside the gate!

The livid glow of the musketry and of the blazing houses, set aflame by shells and rockets, made the place seem a Pandæmonium on earth; dense smoke and dust loaded the hot Indian air. Oaths, cries of agony in many languages, groans, the crash of walls descending in masses under cannon shot, the horrid sound of men grasping each other in mortal struggles, grappling, twining and rolling over in turn, close clasped like ravening wolves, till a weapon shortened in the hand, gave the secret or the random stab, while on every side were to be seen bayonets twisted and broken, shewing how freely they had been used in pinning the fallen to the earth, or the falling against the walls and gates; and as if in mockery of those terrors, there yet fluttered on these places the bills of a Garrison Amateur

Performance, in which the part of "Rob Roy" was to be taken by a Scottish officer, who was now lying in his grave by the Flagstaff Tower; "Die Vernon," by Horace Eversly of the 54th; to be followed by the laughable farce of "His Last Legs;" "Felix O'Callaghan," by Mr. Doyle of the Bengal Fusileers, all for the benefit of a Hindoo School! Scene painter and stage manager, Captain J. T. Harrower, of the 32nd Regiment.

Amid the rattle of the musketry above and below, and the roar of the cannon, as those on the bastions were now turned, in many instances, inward, and fired into the crowded streets or on each other, were heard the hoarse cheers of the avenging British, the yells of the Sikhs, the Belooches, and Ghoorkhas, all fighting in the mere lust of blood, and the shrill war-cry of the Mohammedans, "Deen! Deen!" which seemed to pierce the air.

In one place three thousand Sepoy Infantry, each man with the trident of Vishnu marked on his forehead, made a resolute stand, but the Rifles and 75th went into them with the bayonet, charging through them again and again, till cries of terror replaced those of

"Victory to Holy Mother Gunga! Glory to the beard of Mahadera!"

Gathering a company of the 60th, with the

remnant of his own men, Harrower sought to draw them off from the awful scene in Chandney Choke, where every male native whom the soldiers met was being shot down or bayoneted without question or delay.

He strove to press on towards the palace, the glorious façade of which he could see towering high above the clouds of smoke that filled the city ; but a body of Native Infantry and Cavalry all mingled pell mell, fought hard to oppose all progress in that direction, amid shattered ruins, blazing houses, mangled corpses, dead and dying, horses, camels, and even elephants, which obstructed every foot of the way.

“Shout, oh, army of the Faithful, for Allah will yet destroy the Kaffir dogs !” cried a brilliant horseman, who brandished a jewelled tulwar, and in whom Harrower recognised the Zemindar of Oude, Nouraddeen Abraha al Ashram. “Come on, my faithful Ghazees !” (true believers) he added, making incredible efforts to inspire a charge ; but a 60th Rifleman cut short his career by a bullet through the head.

Then Harrower led on his men, shoulder to shoulder, with the levelled bayonet against the mass, which instantly melted away before them. One fellow, who had made himself particularly active, as he was escaping Temple, caught by his

mustachios, which were of such preposterous length as to be tied over his shoulders in a knot behind him. This was "Colonel" Pershad Sing, whose promotion was finally stopped now by more bayonets than one.

The masses around the palace proved too strong to be forced; it was garrisoned, moreover, by a horde of Mohammedan fanatics, who, under Baboo Bulli Sing, fought within its walls till the last man fell, so with a sick, a weary, and a furious heart, Harrower fell back with his shattered party.

When night fell, the British were in possession of only a portion of the vast city, a task which cost them eleven hundred and forty-seven killed and wounded, and in the punishment of that barbaric horde who so valiantly opposed them, no Pagan worshippers of Nemesis ever proceeded more sternly in their work than did this Christian army of retribution, while their allies, accustomed to Asiatic notions of warfare, revelled in the most unbridled licence, for no hand, save that of death, could restrain them.

So frightful was the heat that six hundred cavalry horses fell dead during the day.

Four other nights and days the strife went on, and it was not until the 19th that the city was swept of its defenders, the palace gates blown in

by cannon, and it was found to be deserted by the royal family. Then, with all its wondrous and unrivalled splendours and treasures, it was given up to be pillaged by the troops. Jewels, silks, velvets, shawls, embroidered saddles for horses and elephants, cloths of gold, carpets sewn with pearls, diamond hilted weapons, epaulettes, fish, dragons and horses, idols, and ingots all of gold or silver, sacks of mohurs, rupees and precious stones, the peacock throne, and everything went to wreck and ruin ; Britons, Sikhs and Ghoorkhas in kiosks, corridors, court and zenana, with dooly-wallahs and camp followers of every kind, made all their own.

Loud and long blew the triumphant bugles of the gallant 60th, while in the magnificent Dewan Khana, the general and the leading officers of his staff drained a bumper to the health of "Her Majesty the Queen."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HODSON'S HORSE.

NOR a trace could be found in the palace of the old king, of his latest Sultana Zeenat Mahal, of the two princes, of Jumma Bukt, the grandson, or of Azeezun, all of whom had been so deeply implicated in the atrocities we have narrated ; nor of Polly Weston or her father, though the most minute search was made for them ; but Baboo Bulli Sing, who, of all the defenders, had alone survived, was detected in the act of making his escape by Sally-port. Though well mounted, he was closely pursued by Major Hodson and his famous troop of Fifty Horse, accompanied by Jack Harrower, who knew that this distinguished Baboo, of all men about the court, would be best able to inform them of where the royal family were in hiding, and there he doubted not that Doctor Weston, or most certainly his daughter, would be found.

As they set forth, Major Hodson rapidly informed Harrower that he had just come in from the capture of the aged king, of his sultana, Zeena Mahal, and the Begum Azeezun, all of whom he had taken at the palace of Kootab, about nine miles from Delhi; that he had, somewhat to the indignation of the staff, granted Mohamed Bahadoor Shah his life, in mercy for his extreme old age and hoary locks, but that at Kootab no trace could be found either of the princes or of the two prisoners who were supposed to be surviving in their hands.

Past the long scene of destruction, which marked where the European bungalows had been burned in Durygunge, past the Wellesley bastion, and the old Kabul Gate, past the jail, and away among the ruins of Ferozebad or ancient Delhi, rode the horsemen in pursuit of the fugitive, through a solitary place of awful desolation, for the district is covered with tombs after tombs of red or white marble, of freestone or granite, with scarcely a tree, and only a species of wild jungle growing between these relics of generation upon generation that have gone down to darkness and to dust unrecorded and unremembered.

In the sunshine the bright Mahratta helmet of Baboo Bulli Sing glittered gaily, but his fresher horse enabled him to distance the pursuers, who

lost sight of him for a time ; then an exclamation of disappointment escaped them all, when his horse was perceived, galloping past them at an angle, riderless and with empty saddle.

"He must have concealed himself in one of these tombs !" cried Harrower.

"Extend your files, men—scatter and search !" said Major Hodson ; "but take him, if you can, alive."

Riding on almost alone, as the horsemen separated and dashed off in different directions, Harrower saw the picturesque figure of the Baboo ascending the ruins of the old observatory, which was built by Mohamed Shah, in 1710, a singular object, which, though styled "the prince of dials," is somewhat difficult of description, as it consists of many towers and detached buildings, with an immense semicircular and equatorial dial, in the centre of which rises a gnomon of stone, nearly one hundred and twenty feet high, having an open staircase that ascends to its summit at an angle of forty-five degrees.

Up this stair, believing himself quite safe, Baboo Bulli Sing was leisurely ascending, when his bright Mahratta cap—the gift of the Nana of Cawnpore—caught the eye of Harrower as it glittered in the sun. Throwing the reins of his horse to a trooper, Jack, with his sword and

pistols, entered the open archway of the ruins, and ascended in pursuit.

He felt the deepest excitement now, though after the horrors and carnage of the past months, and more especially of the last few days, one might have expected every emotion to be stilled or blasé in his heart ; but he was certain that the Baboo must know whither the royal culprits had fled, and might also give some tidings of where those who were so dear to Lena and Kate, to Mellon and himself were concealed.

His chief dread was that the Baboo would die rather than surrender or speak, and a guttural malediction escaped that personage, on finding that he was pursued so closely up a place, from whence there could be no escape but by fighting his way down, or leaping over the wall, which would be only to court certain death among the masses of fallen masonry below ; and there, now, Hodson's dashing troopers, who saw both the fugitive and his pursuer, were gathering fast with shrill cries and brandished sabres.

Blind with impotent fury, and cursing in his heart the folly or mischance that led him to choose a place of shelter so conspicuous and absurd, and from whence there was no retreat or outlet, Bulli Sing, whose progress was greatly impeded by the long and flowing skirts of his

gorgeously embroidered yellow dress, paused when half-way up, and drawing his long Turkish pistols from his girdle, fired both in quick succession. The bullet of the first whistled away into space, but that of the second passed through the linen flap of Harrower's puggeree, and grazed his right ear.

"Half an inch nearer, and you had made a step in the corps, my fine fellow," thought Harrower.

The soubadar had no time for reloading, so he flung his pistols viciously at the head of his antagonist, who avoided them both. Then turning, he resumed his flight, as if courting his kismet, to the very summit of the observatory, where the long and narrow stair ended at a parapet that overhung the profundity below.

There he took breath to prepare for the final struggle, drew his sharp tulwar, and grimly awaited the ascent of Harrower, who could have shot him down now, but that he wished to take him alive, or at least to question him first.

As he drew nearer, step by step, there was a fierce and resolute expression gathering in the dark and formidable face of the Mohammedan, who was resolved to sell his life dearly, and who, believing implicitly in his destiny, felt assured that as he could not protract, neither could Har-

rower anticipate the appointed time of death, written by Azrail on his forehead.

"Soubadar," said Harrower, pistol in hand, while they were yet some steps apart, "I shall, on one condition, grant you life."

"I seek not my life—at your hands least of all, Kaffir dog!" replied the other savagely, as he spat at him in the excess of his loathing.

"I might now shoot you down with my pistols," urged Harrower, "yet I shall spare you on one condition."

"If honourable, name it," said Bulli Sing, while his dark eyes glared like those of a hooded snake—

"Say where the princes are concealed—those cowardly Shahzaddahs who have lured so many brave men to destruction, and then left them to perish miserably?"

"Shahbash! true—true, too true!" replied the Mohammedan, stung to bitterness by the truth of the words, and half lowering his guard.

"Where, then, shall we seek for them—say, that I may grant you life, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen? All is lost—their cause, and yours too—are alike gone. Speak, or with this pistol—"

"Po, po! put up your pistol; it is not in the power of lead or steel to wring words from me. But

why should the Shahzaddahs who have not struck one blow for God or the Prophet, or for their own inheritance, escape, when so many have died, and more are yet to die?" continued the soubadar in a burst of rage and bitterness; "you will find them in the Tomb of Homaion!" he added, throwing up his arms with a gesture of mingled despair and grief.

In such an airy locality, this was a fatal movement; he lost his balance, vanished over the low parapet, and ere Harrower could again speak, or attempt to save him, he fell whizzing through space, a crushed and palpitating mass, at the feet of Major Hudson, who was seated in his saddle, impatiently below. This casualty scarcely excited wonder; it was only a unit in the mass of carnage, amid which they were involved.

Harrower hurried down to rejoin the Major, who was a very handsome man with fine regular features; his flowing white puggeree concealed a premature baldness, but he had close, crisp, curly hair at the temples, eyes clear and piercing, a nose perfectly straight, smart mustachios and close-clipped beard, and he looked remarkably well in the dashing uniform of the Irregular Cavalry, which presented a marked contrast to the tattered turn-out of Jack Harrower, who was seeking to earn his cross of valour in a Garibaldi shirt and

by cannon, and it was found to be deserted by the royal family. Then, with all its wondrous and unrivalled splendours and treasures, it was given up to be pillaged by the troops. Jewels, silks, velvets, shawls, embroidered saddles for horses and elephants, cloths of gold, carpets sewn with pearls, diamond hilted weapons, epaulettes, fish, dragons and horses, idols, and ingots all of gold or silver, sacks of mohurs, rupees and precious stones, the peacock throne, and everything went to wreck and ruin ; Britons, Sikhs and Ghoorkhas in kiosks, corridors, court and zenana, with dooly-wallahs and camp followers of every kind, made all their own.

Loud and long blew the triumphant bugles of the gallant 60th, while in the magnificent Dewan Khana, the general and the leading officers of his staff drained a bumper to the health of "Her Majesty the Queen."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HODSON'S HORSE.

Nor a trace could be found in the palace of the old king, of his latest Sultana Zeenat Mahal, of the two princes, of Jumma Bukt, the grandson, or of Azeezun, all of whom had been so deeply implicated in the atrocities we have narrated; nor of Polly Weston or her father, though the most minute search was made for them; but Baboo Bulli Sing, who, of all the defenders, had alone survived, was detected in the act of making his escape by Sally-port. Though well mounted, he was closely pursued by Major Hodson and his famous troop of Fifty Horse, accompanied by Jack Harrower, who knew that this distinguished Baboo, of all men about the court, would be best able to inform them of where the royal family were in hiding, and there he doubted not that Doctor Weston, or most certainly his daughter, would be found.

ketry had long since died away; but here and there the smoke of a burning house curled round the gilded minarets of Delhi, shewing where still the Ghoorkha or the Punjabee pursued the pleasing work of pillage and destruction.

It was evening now, and the long shadow of the stately Kutab Minar, fell from its broad base far across the ruins of old Ferozabad, even to the Lake Bastion of New Delhi; and now before the galloping troopers rose the beautiful façade of the tomb of Homaion, the son of Baber.

On a square plateau of one hundred and sixty eight pointed arches, rises this edifice, which is of great height, having twelve open cupolas, and high over these, a round tower closed by a dome of vast extent and magnificence, and built entirely of milk-white marble.

This is the tomb of that Homaion who invaded Goojerat, made war on the Afghans, reconquered Delhi and Agra, and played a great game in the Indian world, about the time the Scots and English were breaking each other's heads under Henry VIII. and the little Queen Mary, in the wars of the Reformation. Built by his son, the Emperor Akbar, it forms one of the most pleasing features in that magnificent landscape, and near it is a ruined pyramid, erroneously ascribed to Alexander after the defeat of Porus.

The shadows of the dewy evening were deepening fast, when Hodson's corps of guides, all resolute and determined men, nobly mounted and splendidly disciplined and equipped, drew up in line before the gates of that beautiful mausoleum, and when he and Harrower, the only two white men present, rode forward, fearlessly through a multitude, consisting of many thousands of armed men, fugitive sepoys, citizens of Delhi, ruined zemindars, and ryots, budmashes, and scoundrels of all kinds, rendered desperate by recent events, by slaughter, pillage, and the fear of approaching punishment. These men crowded in sullen and sombre masses under the arcades of the plateau on which the tomb is built, or hovered among the wilderness of ruined walls and neglected gardens around it.

The time was one of keen excitement to Harrower, and the officer to whom he had, on this occasion, attached himself; for a single mistake, a premature shot, an act of useless violence or indecision, might bring destruction on them both, and on all their followers!

Harrower surveyed with deep interest the wondrous façade of the tomb, carved as it is so marvellously, like the finest lace-work, and the milk-white dome that was over all, its cold shadows rounding off into purple; and he hoped in his

heart, that now at last, poor Polly Weston would be found, her story learned, and her sufferings avenged !

Though armed to the teeth, this multitude of men—the rabble of Delhi, and of all the revolted cities—were fairly cowed by the cool and resolute bearing of the major, who sternly commanded them to lay down their arms, an order which many of them obeyed. Then dismounting, he and Harrower entered the building, in the centre of which is the sarcophagus of Homaion, covered with precious cloths from Mecca, constantly adorned with fresh flowers, and having hung around it many brilliant silver lamps, the oils of which diffuse an aromatic odour round the interior.

There were those who had been guilty of so many atrocious crimes, the two princes of Delhi, and their nephew, seeking as it were, protection from the living, under the shadow of the dead.

The fat, sensual, and unmanly Shahzaddahs, started from the steps of the sarcophagus, their sleepy and almond-shaped eyes dilated, and their cheeks pale with terror, as they held up their flabby and begemmed hands in deprecation, while the more boyish ruffian, whose name was little known, save as an abettor of their outrages, salaamed with his forehead on the floor.

But we must be brief in the narration of events so recent.

The dark and scowling guards about there, laid down their arms, on finding there was an unmistakable expression in the faces of the two officers who confronted them. Harrower looked eagerly round. There was no trace of Doctor Weston or of his daughter. Of all the many faces that appeared amid the half light and dusky obscurity of the building, the only white ones were Hodson's and his own.

"Sahibs," said Mogul, the elder brother, whose lips quivered with fear; "as ye hope for mercy on that day of wrath, when the solid rocks shall depart in flames and ashes—when the winnowing of the world past and present shall come to pass, and the wheat be separated from the tares and chaff—so I say, as ye shall hope for mercy then, accord it now."

"Have mercy!" added Abubeker, bowing his head, while Hodson and Harrower surveyed them by turns, with disgust and astonishment—their bearing was so mean, so intensely abject.

"Mercy to you!" ejaculated the Major, who had a pistol in each hand.

"Even to us who have fallen," said Mogul.

"And why should we accord it?" asked Harrower scornfully, in Hindostanee.

“Lest ye seek in vain for mercy on that awful day, when, as the blessed Koran hath it, the hills shall roll away before the breath of the Lord, even as carded wool rolleth before the wind of Heaven,” whined Abubeker with a deep salaam.

Many of the sepoy and budmashes, excited by these words, and by the bearing of the Fakir Gunga Rai, began to resume their arms, and the capping and cocking of rifles were heard in the darker recesses of the tomb; but Hodson, stern and resolute as Ajax, was resolved not to be cheated of his prey.

“Mercy!” implored Mogul again.

“Such mercy as you showed to our helpless women and children shall you have of us!” cried Hodson, and seeing a rescue imminent, he shot the three princes down in such rapid succession, that in the vibration of a pendulum, they were all lying bleeding on the floor.

Pierced through the head, Mirza Mogul and his nephew fell forward on their faces and never moved again; but a shrill cry escaped Abubeker, who had been shot in the region of the heart. He writhed up on his hands and knees, with the blood pouring from his mouth, and the orifice in his chest; and now forgetting his English, he spoke entirely in Hindostanee, painfully, yet forcibly, and at intervals.

"Oh! brother Mogul, what is there now on this earth worth sorrowing for, and why should we begin here, in the tomb of Homaion? The power of the true prophet has failed us, even as that of the false god, Brahma. . . . What are our riches, our gold, our diamonds and sapphires, but dross—what our fine raiment, but food for moths—what our palaces, but the dust of generations in a new form—what our bodies but food for worms in the end? Yet a little time, and all shall come to this. Allah hath ordained it so. The hour in which we were to die, was written on our foreheads—and the hour hath come!"

"Captain Harrower, you had better question this moralising villain, ere it be too late," said Hodson, grimly, as he reloaded his pistols.

"Where is the youngest daughter of Weston sahib?" Harrower asked, earnestly, in the ear of Abubeker, over whose face the livid hue of death was stealing; "speak!" he urged, as the dark eyes dilated, and a cruel kind of smile played on the thick, but now pale lips—a smile of spite and hate—"do not die with a falsehood on your tongue—where is she?"

"Look for her—look for her—"

"Where—where?"

"Inside the Calcutta Gate," faltered the other, as the blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and he fell back dead on the marble floor.

A hoarse sound pervaded the hollows of the great tomb. Hodson thought it was the precursor of a terrible revenge; but it proved to be only the rising shout of the inconstant rabble, seeking to win the favour of the victors.

“Shabash! wah-wah—well done! Their crimes have met a just penalty!”

Even the wicked Sultana Zeenat Mahal could not have wished the removal of all between her son and the shadowy throne of Delhi more completely than Hodson’s hand had achieved it!

“Off with their royal robes,” said the inexorable major, in a voice of stern authority, “and hang these carrion naked by the neck, in the spot where so many Christian women and girls perished by their orders.”

Ere this Harrower had started at a gallop for the Calcutta Gate, with terrible forebodings in his agitated breast. There, against the palace wall, which was shattered by cannon shot, and thickly starred by rifle bullets, was the body of a girl, snowy white, sorely emaciated, and nailed by her hands and feet against the masonry, with her golden hair—“that mute ornament which God has given to woman”—waving in ripples on the wind, as the head drooped forward, so that the once sweet young face was unseen!

* * * * *

The crimson light of the setting sun was giving way to the shadows of night, that rose like a darkening tide on tower and dome as they gradually stole upward ; but ere the last red ray had faded from the marble summit of the Kutab Minar, there might be seen in the kotwally, or mayor's court, in the Street of Silver, hung by the neck upon a common gibbet, naked to the girdle, and defiled with dust and gore, the remains of the three last descendants of the Great Mogul—of Timour—he who, after conquering Persia and Transoxania, made himself Emperor of all India.

Three days and nights they hung there, ere the task of Nemesis was complete !

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HIGHROAD TO OLD ENGLAND.

FROM these events and places we may gladly change the scene to the deck of the Arcot, one of those magnificent ships, the Peninsular and Oriental Liners, which was getting under weigh in the Hooghly, on an afternoon of the Spring subsequent to the fall of Delhi, and the transportation of the old King and his Begum, Zeenat Mahal, by sentence of a General Court Martial.

Crowded by passengers, and filled with luggage and goods, the Arcot had been warped out into the stream, while a golden haze enveloped land and water.

Upon her poop, seated on camp-stools, watching the interesting process of getting ready for sea, stowing cables and gear, shaking canvas out of the bunt, and so forth, and enjoying the while "a quiet weed," were Harrower and Mellon, with

the wives smiling beside them, all happy in the consciousness that they were leaving behind greater sorrows and terrors than would be endured in this world again, and that once more they were restored to ease, to civilization, and to peace; and there, too, crouched at Lena's feet, upon a hassock, was the faithful ayah, Safiyah Bux, and her new charge, the little orphan of the Cashmere Gate, "Mamma's Pet," for he had as yet no other name.

The Arcot soon dropped down the windings of the shoaly and brackish Indian river to Garden Reach, where the Hooghly Pilot came on board, and from thence to Diamond Harbour.

The City of Palaces,—the Chowringhee of the Nabobs and men of money; the citadel of Fort William with its snow white barracks, green ramparts and gothic church; the Black Town with hovels of mud, mats and bamboo, and the opposite suburb of Howrah were all passing swiftly like a dream or panorama, and ere long, Diamond Harbour was astern.

Like a dream too, were the hideous Sonderbuns with their low stunted marshes, where the spotted hyænas lurked, the snakes hissed, and where the junglewood almost scrapes the steamer's side at times; where scarcely a bird is to be seen, and where here and there, a rag fluttering from a

bamboo indicates the spot where a tiger had torn a man to pieces.

On past the flags and ships of all the world ; on past the last of the rich native row boats, with gilded sterns, and peacocks painted at the prow ; on past where crocodiles and sharks were gobbling at cockup, mango fish and dead Hindoos, whose friends had been too poor to burn them ; on past " scagirt Saugar's desert isle," where the Java fern, and the Bukrah palm strive for existence amid the dark and oozy mud.

Midnight clangs from the ship's bell forward ; the pilot has pocketed his fee, drunk his glass of brandy paunee at the capstan-head and gone ashore in his tug steamer, so the last link with India is broken ; the light-house on the Sand Heads is now bearing west by north, and the country of the Rajahs and the Moguls, that land of glory and splendour, of terror, disease and death, is sinking fast astern into the world of waters.

Our friends lingered long on deck that night.

Under the soothing influence of time, change of circumstances, and of scene, the colour had come back to the soft cheeks of Kate Mellon, and even to those of Lena Harrower (we must give them their wedded names now) though by habit she was a pale girl and not so brilliant in her


beauty as the radiant blonde, her only sister now.

Their fellow voyagers were not, as Jack said, "likely to be a lively lot," there being among them many widows and orphans, and several sick and wounded officers, whose entire families had perished in the Great Mutiny of the preceding year.

He and Rowley Mellon were less patriarchal in their aspect now, than they had been of late; their exuberant beards had been shaven off, and Rowley's had once more given place to his fashionable and cherished flyaway whiskers, just as the regimental rags, jerseys, and puggerees, in which they had been seeking the V.C. "even at the cannon's mouth," had been relinquished for soft Tweed suits and most unromantic wide-awakes.

Now the stately Arcot was out in the great Bay of Bengal; fast revolved the giant screw-propeller; there was white foam gleaming in the long wake astern, and the black funnel overhead poured out its broad pennant of smoke on the friendly breeze.

From the engine-room, where the drum and piston went clank, clank, clank incessantly, from the cuddy and cabin, strange weird lights gleamed redly upward at times, on mast, and spar, and sail, while smooth and blue the sea reflected the tint, and the stars of the cloudless Indian sky.



Some invalid soldiers were joining the sailors in the forecastle bunks, in a song, and jovially the chorus of "Cheer, boys, cheer," mingled with the notes of a piano, that came tinkling softly at times from the ladies' cabin aft.

Hope gleams up in the hearts of the wedded quartette who linger at the taffrail, for they are on the watery highway to Europe—to old England and to home!

Much have Harrower and Lena to say yet, though they had been married at Ninee Tal; but now thoughts come too thick and fast for utterance and coherence.

Leeward of the fore and aft mainsail, and under the shelter of its friendly shadow, he could pass his arm unchecked round that soft and beautiful figure, in the blessed assurance that she was his at last—his own—and that their fullest and fondest anticipations of joy had been realised.

Now Lena might ponder as other girls have done, on the long, the shadowy, and the happy future, on wedded love, and a happy English home in rugged Cornwall, or perhaps again in dear Thorpe Audley; on children, little Jacks and Kates and Pollys springing up around her, and her golden hoop growing tighter as she waxed in plumpness and in years.

"Oh, Jack," she whispered, as she hid her face

in his neck, "all we have endured seems like a terrible fantasy now!"

"A fantasy that is over, dearest Lena, with a blissful reality after it," said Harrower. "We are safe on the high-road to old England, at last, and you are by my side, Lena, my first, my last love, and my only one!"

THE END.



Suitable for the Country and Sea-side.

By W. H. AINSWORTH.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 337 Windsor Castle | 369 James the Second. |
| 339 Tower of London. | 372 Star Chamber. |
| 343 Miser's Daughter. | 375 Flitch of Bacon. |
| 347 Rookwood. | 378 Lancashire Witches. |
| 351 Old St. Paul's. | 381 Mervyn Clitheroe. |
| 356 Crichton. | 384 Ovingdean Grange. |
| 359 Guy Fawkes. | 387 St. James' 390 Auriol. |
| 362 Spendthrift. | 393 Jack Shepherd. |

By VARIOUS AUTHORS.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 111 Stories of Waterloo | <i>W. H. Maxwell.</i> |
| 219 Colleen Bawn; or the Collegians | <i>Gerald Griffin.</i> |
| 250 The Dark Lady | <i>W. H. Maxwell.</i> |
| 255 Violet, the Danseuse | <i>Anonymous.</i> |
| 265 Royal Favourite | <i>Mrs. Gore.</i> |
| 266 Kindness in Women | <i>Bayly.</i> |
| 268 Ghost Hunter | <i>Banin.</i> |
| 291 Ambassador's Wife | <i>Mrs. Gore.</i> |
| 294 Old Commodore | <i>Author of "Rattlin the Reef."</i> |
| 302 The Green Hand | <i>Cupples.</i> |
| 305 The Albatross | <i>Kingston.</i> |
| 321 Cinq Mars | <i>De Vigny.</i> |
| 324 Zingra, the Gipsy | <i>Mrs. Maillard.</i> |
| 335 Ladder of Life | <i>Amelia B. Edwards.</i> |
| 338 My Brother's Wife | <i>Amelia B. Edwards.</i> |
| 341 Pride of the Mess | <i>Author of "Cavendish."</i> |
| 342 My Brother's Keeper | <i>Miss Wetherell.</i> |
| 345 Scarlet Letter | <i>Hawthorn.</i> |
| 349 House of the Seven Gables | <i>Hawthorn.</i> |
| 350 Tough Yarns | <i>The Old Sailor.</i> |
| 355 Whom to Marry, &c. | <i>Mayhew.</i> |
| 358 Lilly Dawson | <i>Mrs. Crowe.</i> |
| 361 Rita: an Autobiography. | |
| 376 Henpecked Husband | <i>Lady Scott.</i> |
| 379 Little Wife | <i>Mrs. Gore.</i> |
| 385 Adelaide Lindsay | <i>Author of "Emilia Wyndham."</i> |
| 391 Family Feud | <i>Thomas Cooper.</i> |
| 394 Nothing but Money | <i>T. S. Arthur.</i> |
| 396 The Letter Bag of the Great Western | <i>Sam Slick.</i> |
| 406 Respectable Sinners. | |
| 426 Moods | <i>Louisa M. Alcott.</i> |
| 430 Singleton Fontenoy | <i>James Hannay.</i> |

Suitable for the Country and Sea-side.

By HENRY COCKTON.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 254 Percy Effingham | 408 George Julian |
| 271 Valentine Vox | 422 Stanley Thorn |

By ALBERT SMITH.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 119 Adventures of Mr. Ledbury | 281 Pottleton Legacy |
| 126 Scattergood Family | 113 Marchioness of Brinvilliers. 1s. 6d. |
| 270 Christopher Tadpole | The Medical Student. 1s. |

By AUTHOR OF "WHITEFRIARS."

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 28 Whitefriars | 132 Owen Tudor |
| 53 Whitehall | 244 City Banker |
| 67 Cæsar Borgia | 306 Mauleverer's Divorce |

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Price 2s. each.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 44 The Night Side of Nature | <i>Mrs. Croze.</i> |
| 50 Susan Hopley | <i>Mrs. Croze.</i> |
| 68 Scottish Chiefs | <i>Jane Porter.</i> |
| 109 Pastor's Fireside | <i>Jane Porter.</i> |
| 155 Prairie Bird | <i>Hon. C. A. Murray.</i> |
| 158 Captain Blake | <i>Maxwell.</i> |
| 167 Colin Clink | <i>Hooton.</i> |
| 168 Hector O'Halloran | <i>Maxwell.</i> |
| 170 Country Curate | <i>G. R. Gleig.</i> |
| 175 The Clockmaker. 2s. 6d. | <i>Sam Slick.</i> |
| 176 Rory O'More | <i>Samuel Lover.</i> |
| 179 Manœuvring Mother | <i>Author of "The Flirt."</i> |
| 182 The Two Frigates | <i>George Cupples.</i> |
| 190 Soldier of Lyons | <i>Mrs. Gore.</i> |
| 195 Pirate of the Mediterranean | <i>Kingston.</i> |
| 197 Mothers and Daughters | <i>Mrs. Gore.</i> |
| 198 Quadroon | <i>Mayne Reed.</i> |
| 199 War Trail | <i>Mayne Reed.</i> |
| 210 Gilbert Gurney | <i>Theodore Hook.</i> |
| 211 A Wife to Order | <i>Gerstaecker.</i> |
| 214 Trevelyan | <i>Lady Scott.</i> |
| 222 Pride of Life | <i>Lady Scott.</i> |
| 226 Who is to Have it? | |
| 236 Two Convicts | <i>Gerstaecker.</i> |
| 237 Deeds, not Words | <i>M. M. Bell.</i> |

